GRADE

7

STEPS TO PERFECTION

An Islamic Curriculum For Youth

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Under the Guidance of
NABI R. MIR (ABIDI)

AL-KISA FOUNDATION
SABA

STEPS TO PERFECTION

An Islamic Curriculum for Youth

GRADE

7

AL-KISA FOUNDATION

Preface and Introduction by Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)

Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

Salāmun ʿalaykum,

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

Nūn! [I swear] by the pen and what they inscribe![1]

All praise is for Allah, the Lord and Nurturer of the worlds. It is an honor and pleasure to address you dear teachers, administrators, educators, and parents. This āyah of the Qurʾān demonstrates the sanctity of writing. When Allah takes an oath by those who write and that which has been written, it clearly demonstrates the lofty status of writing and books. If we do a proper job in actualizing the potential of this medium, Allah guarantees us a high position. We know that Islam places great emphasis on education as a whole.

أَوَّلُ الدِّينِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ، وَكَمَالُ مَعْرِفَتِهِ التَّصْديقُ بِهِ، وَكَمَالُ التَّصْدِيقِ بِهِ تَوْحِيدُهُ، وَكَمَالُ تَوْحِيدِهِ الاخْلاصُ لَهُ، وَكَمَالُ الاخْلاصِ لَهُ نَفْيُ الصِّفَاتِ عَنْهُ، لِشَهَادَةِ كُلِّ صِفَة أَنَّها غَيْرُ المَوْصُوفِ، وَشَهَادَةِ كُلِّ مَوْصُوف أَنَّهُ غَيْرُ الصِّفَةِ....

The foremost in religion is the recognizing of Him; and the perfection of recognizing Him is to witness Him; the perfection of witnessing Him is to believe in His Oneness; the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him as Pure; and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute…[2]

Here, Amīr al-Muʾminīn (ʿa) demonstrates the importance of instilling systematic knowledge and *maʿrifah* into our children, especially our youth. The Imām indicates that complete and perfect *maʿrifah* can only be reached by learning and grasping the concept of Tawḥīd and the beliefs that stem from it from a young age.

Because human beings love beauty and goodness innately, and because Allah is perfect beauty, and Islam, the Qurʾān, and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) are the manifestations of Allah's beauty, when we find the *maʿrifah* and knowledge of this beauty, we are automatically drawn to it, it blossoms in our heart. Similarly, if we can achieve this for our youth, they will automatically be drawn to and connected with their faith, and become ambassadors of Islam, the Qurʾān, and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). It will also cultivate in them a drive and passion to fulfill their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

It goes without saying, of course, that this knowledge must be from the correct source, comprehensive in nature, and have topics that are relevant for the guidance of our youth, particularly for issues and challenges that they face on a daily basis. The knowledge that our youth acquire should be foundational and a precursor to improve, learn further, and build a love for Islam and the Qurʾān within themselves.

1 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Qalam, 68:1

2 *Naḥjul Balāghah*, Sermon 1

After delving further, we find that this education can be gained in two formats: informal and formal. Informal education entails formats such as speeches, classes, discussions, and a teacher's interactions within the classroom. Formal education refers to the standards and guidelines that teachers follow when teaching, commonly referred to as the curriculum. While both forms of education are integral to the learning process, a cohesive curriculum is crucial in ensuring that the deliverance of education is done so in an organized and logical sequence.

Additionally, as we know, Islam is a complete way of life. Allah says in the Noble Qurʾān:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say, "Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the worlds."[3]

In an ideal world, our education system would be all-encompassing. However, this is difficult to implement due to various limitations and circumstances. For example, full-time schools generally only allocate a few hours a week for Islamic studies. Similarly, weekend schools also only operate for a few hours once a week, over 30-34 weeks of the year. Therefore, Sunday schools and full-time Islamic schools overall do not have the capacity to adopt a completely integrated system for our children to learn Islam in conjuction with other subjects. As a result, most schools focus on these five Islamic subjects: Qurʾān, ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq. It is with this in mind that we are honored to compile and develop a Pre-K-12 curriculum for Islamic Studies and Qurʾān, as well as for life skills and contemporary issues related to our daily lives.

Alḥamdulillāh, Kisa Kids is pleased to present the Islamic Studies Curriculum, which focuses on four core subjects: ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq. InshāʾAllāh, we hope to further develop the fifth core subject, Qurʾān, in areas such as tajwīd, mafāhīm (understanding), and tafsīr (deeper understanding).The journey to create this curriculum started over 20 years ago, but the true emphasis and efforts was over the last 6 years where we piloted the lessons, and got feedback from the community. In this time, the Pre-K-6th curriculum has undergone many iterations and revisions to the extent that it has reached a satisfactory level.

After piloting the 7th grade curriculum for several years, based on input from different individuals and institutions, we have transferred some of the topics into 8th grade and added additional lessons.

The 9th-12th grade curriculum is also a compilation of different resources. Although we had initially created a scope and sequence and planned to fully develop the lessons ourselves, we ran into some unforeseen hurdles with the COVID-19 pandemic. But alḥamdulillāh, we have reached some great milestones in our Islamic Studies Curriculum with your duʿās. A more detailed method on how the curriculum was developed is outlined below.

3 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Anʿām 6:162

Method Used to Compile this Curriculum

1. As with all projects under Al-Kisa Foundation, the curriculum was guided by scholars, educators, and the Kisa mission team.

2. Several resources were used in collaboration with other developers, including, but not limited to, madrasah.net, the Kawther Learning Center Team, the Islamic Syllabus Team, the Sirat Curriculum Team, as well as books of great scholars like Shahīd Motahhari, Āyatullāh Ja'far Sobhani, etc.

3. The first step was identifying the challenges faced by youth and creating a scope and sequence of this information by organizing it into five categories: ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, akhlāq, and contemporary issues. After this, we designed 64 lessons in order to fit the average Sunday school schedule, also bearing in mind that the material could be expanded further for a full-time school.

4. Next, each lesson was given guiding points by myself or other scholars to guide the outcome and method of each lesson.

5. Each lesson was then written by an educator, reviewed once again by a scholar to verify the content, and finally given back to an educator to create worksheets, etc.

6. This would finalize the content portion of the lesson, after which the graphics team would create the layout and graphics for each.

7. Of course, this was a monumental task with many individuals involved, all of which was tracked using a project management software.

Once the final review was done by myself, the curriculum, along with supporting slides, activities, and games, was published online on our Salam Online website (www.salamonline.education) for the benefit of others. I am humbled to be a part of this process, and am very aware that despite our best efforts, there is lots of room for improvement. I humbly ask all the parents, educators, students, school administrators, and others who utilize this curriculum to please bless us with your constructive feedback, criticism, suggestions, and comments. After all, only the Qurʾān is free from all defects and mistakes! We welcome and look forward to your feedback.

Additionally, please do consider sharing your resources with us so that we can possibly incorporate them into the curriculum and enhance it inshāʾAllāh. We are interested in any teaching methodologies, supplemental curriculum, or additional resources used. Digital resources, such as presentations, games, and quizzes, are also appreciated and can be shared with admin@alkisafoundation.org. Jazākallāhu khayran!

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the beloved Imām of our time (ʿaj). May Allah (swt) hasten his reappearance and help us to become his true companions.

Acknowledgments

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): The pen of a writer is mightier than the blood of a martyr.

We are especially thankful to the Kisa Australia Team, Kisa Mission Team, Shaykh Salim Yusufali, Shaykh Ehsan Ahmadi, Srs. Urooj Kazmi, Samina Ali, Bhavani Ali, Sabika Mithani, Fatima Falahati, Zahra Sabur, Liliana Villalvazo, Amna Hussain, Fatima Hussain, Zahra Eslami, Fathema Abidi, Zehra Abbas, Maryam Hakimpanah, Maryam Ershad, Zahra Memar, Rabab Jafri, Maria Al-Janabi, Shamama Zehra, Irum Abbas, Marwa Kachmar, Nida Syed, Zainab Hussain, Maliha Abdi, Hanan Wazne, Tasneem Hudda, Anjum Afzal, Sarah Silvaggi, Mina Mozaffarian, Aliya Dhanjy, Lina Dewjee, Sumiya Baqri, Sahar Zaidi, Yamna Jafri, Sana Abbas, Wajma Ahad, Rumina Hashmani, Sakina Abdallah, Tasneem Hudda, Tahseen Shariff, Noor Nasrallah, Swaleha Virjee, Farhana Mohamedali, Houra Khalife, Julie Karaki, Brs. Taymaz Tabrizi, Ali Alsamail, Abidali Mohamedali, Mohammad Abbas Virjee, Mohammad Hendijanifard, the Tabatabai family, all the illustrators who allowed us to use their illustrations, SABA, SABA Sunday School Team, RISE Academy, Kisa Kids syllabus committees, teachers, and staff for their support and assistance in the development and testing of the curriculum.

SABA and Al-Kisa Foundation are also very thankful to the Islamic organizations and schools of Ahlul'Bait at London-Stanmore, London-Hujjat, Vancouver, Minnesota, Toronto, and all others whose syllabus and books were used for the inspiration and creation of this curriculum.

Please remember all the people involved in this project in your prayers.

Authors and Editors: Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi) and Curriculum Committee

We pray to Allah to give us the strength and tawfīq to perform our duties and responsibilities.

With duʿās,

Nabi Raza Abidi

For all questions, concerns, suggestions, and feedback, please contact admin@alkisafoundation.org

Disclaimer: Religious texts have *not* been translated verbatim so as to meet the developmental and comprehension needs of children.

Copyright © 2009; 2017; 2019; 2020, 2022, by Al-Kisa Foundation; SABA Global

All rights reserved. First edition 2017. Second edition 2019. Third edition 2020. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, please write to the publisher at the address below.

Kisa Kids Publications
4415 Fortran Court
San Jose, CA 95134

(260) KISA-KID [547-2543]

info@kisakids.org

Table of Contents

Preface and Introduction by Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi) iv
Method Used to Compile this Curriculum vi
Dedication vii
Acknowledgments vii

ʿAQĀʾID (BELIEFS)

Chapter 1: Why Religion?

1.1 PURPOSE OF HUMAN BEINGS 20
Extension Activity: The Resolution 23

ANALOGY GENERATOR 24
Extension Activity 26
Summary Questions 28

1.2 NEED FOR RELIGION 30
Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs 33
Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs Continued... 34
Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs Continued... 36
Homework 1.2b: 43

1.3 ISLAM: THE BEST RELIGION 44
Worksheet 1.3 48
Qurʾān Activity 53

Chapter 2: Attributes of Allah

2.1A ALLAH'S (SWT) ATTRIBUTES 56
Activity 2.1a: 60
Lesson Questions and Project 62
Allah's Attributes Part I3 62
Oral Narrative Interview Project 63

2.1B ALLAH'S (SWT) ATTRIBUTES II 64
Worksheet 2.1b: Allah (swt) the Nurturer 69

2.2 TAWḤĪD 70
Homework Activity 2.2b: The Signs of Allah (swt) 77
Video Activity 2.2c 78
Video Questions 78

2.3 ALLAH'S (SWT) JUSTICE 80
Activity 2.3a: Puzzle 1 83
Activity 2.3b: Puzzle 2 84
Extension: 86
Activity 2.3c: A Matter of Perspective 88
Activity 2.3d: Tunnel Vision 92
Summary Questions 93
Allah's (swt) Justice Worksheet 2.3e 95

Chapter 3: Divine Guides

3.1 THE NEED FOR DIVINE GUIDE 98
Activity 3.1a: Expert Advice! 100
Activity 3.1b 101
Students should take out 2 sheets of paper, markers, scissors, and glue/tape. Working independently and completely silently, students should make a house using their materials. After 5 - 10 minutes, students should all keep their houses on their desks and walk around to see each others' creations. 101
Activity 3.1c: What's in a Leader? 103
Activity 3.1d: Gains and Guidance 105
Worksheet 3.1e: Divine Guides 106

3.2 WHY WE NEED PROPHETS 108
Activity 3.2a 108
Activity 3.2b: Karbala and Me 111
Homework Activity 3.2c: 113
Story Assignment 3.2d 114

3.3 FROM PROPHETHOOD TO IMĀMAH 122
Activity 3.3a: Recap and Rediscover 124
Extension Activity 126
Activity 3.3b: Taking Perspectives 129
Activity 3.3b: Continued 130
Homework Activity 3.3c 131

3.4 ʿISMAH 134
Activity 3.4a: Figuratively Speaking 135
Activity 3.4b: Review Questions 140

3.5 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NOBLE QURʾĀN 142
Activity 3.5a: Recreating Revelation 143
Activity 3.5b: Translation Telephone 147
Activity 3.5c: Prophetic Pictionary 147
Activity 3.5d: Quranic Lessons 149
Activity 3.5e: Turning to Tafsir 150
Activity 3.5f: Expert Advice 151
Homework Review 3.5g 157

Chapter 4: Qiyāmah

4.1 THE NECESSITY OF QIYĀMAH 162
Activity 4.1a: Eliminating Time Wasters and Distractions 169
Extension Activity 172

4.2 ALLAH'S MERCY AND JUSTICE 174
Activity 4.2a: 178
Activity 4.2b: 181

4.3 THE SOUL 182
Activity 4.3a: Nafs Role-Playing 185
Focus Activity 4.3b: 188
Worksheet 4.3c: New Beginnings 190

FIQH (ISLAMIC LAWS)

Chapter 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO TAQLĪD 196
Activity 1.1: Can You Help Ahmad? 201

1.2 CHOOSING A MARJAʿ 202
Activity 1.2a: Common Terms. 206
Activity 1.2b: Brainstorm 206
Activity 1.2c: Selecting a Marjaʿ 207

Chapter 2

2.1 ṬAHĀRAH AND NAJĀSAH 212
Activity 2.1a: Ṭahārah and Najāsah Review Worksheet 216
Activity 2.1b: Am I Tāhir or Najis?. 216

2.2 WUḌŪʾ, GHUSL AND TAYAMMUM 218
Activity 2.2a: Conditions of Wuḍūʾ 221
Activity 2.2b: Make a Tayammum Kit 225
Activity 2.2c: Review Questions 225

Chapter 3

3.1 PRELIMINARIES TO PRAYER 230
Activity 3.1a: What Time Is It?. 232
Act One!. 236
Activity 3.1b: Act One Worksheet. 237
Activity 3.1c: Act One Worksheet (During skits) 238

3.2 FURTHER RULES OF ṢALĀH 240
Activity 3.2a: Void or Valid 242
Activity 3.2b: Create a Poster 246
Activity 3.2c: Review Worksheet 246

3.3 ṢALĀH: KHUSHŪʿ 248
3.3a: Reflection Activity 251
Jigsaw! 251
3.3b: Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #1. 252
3.3c: Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #2 253
3.3d: Jigsaw Student Handout - Ḥadīth #3 254
3.3e: Action Plan 255

Chapter 4

4.1 FASTING 258
Activity 4.1a: Ethical Fasting Worksheet. 260
Activity 4.1b: Review Questions. 265

4.2 CHARITY 266
Activity 4.2a: Forms of Charity 267
Activity 4.2b: Benefits of Ṣalāh and Zakāh. 267
Activity 4.2c: Spending for the Sake of Allah (swt). 269
Activity 4.2d: Critical Analysis. 272

Activity 4.2e: A Ripple Effect of Social Benefits. 274
Activity 4.2f: Benefits & Harms Role-Playing. 275

Chapter 5

5.1 ḤIJĀB. 278
Activity 5.1a: Maḥram or Non-maḥram 279
Activity 5.1c: Partner/Group Skit Worksheet. 282
Activity 5.1d: Review Questions. 283

5.2 RULES OF FOOD AND DRINK 284
Activity 5.2a: Najāsat 287
Activity 5.2b:Mustaḥab and Makrūh 288
Activity 5.2c: Review Questions 289

5.3 MUSIC AND MEDIA. 290
Activity 5.3a: What differentiates ḥarām music from ḥalāl music? 292
Activity 5.3b: Video Game Features. 295
Activity 5.3c: Review Questions 297

HISTORY & ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

Chapter 1: Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)

1.1 PROPHET MUḤAMMAD'S (Ṣ) EARLY LIFE 302
Activity 1.1a: Deciphering the Themes in a Ḥadīth 306
Discuss & Write 308
Activity 1.1b 309

1.2 THE PROPHET'S (Ṣ) MESSENGERSHIP BEGINS 310
Activity 1.2a: Review Questions 315

Chapter 2: Lives of the Maʿṣūmīn (ʿa)

2.1 IMĀM ʿALĪ'S (ʿA) STRENGTH & SUBMISSION 318
Activity 2.1a: Review Question 322
Worksheet 2.1b 323
Worksheet 2.1c 324

2.2 FROM PROPHETHOOD TO IMĀMAH 326
Homework Activity 2.2a. 329

2.3 SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH'S (ʿA) STATUS 330
Activity 2.3a: Scenarios 335

2.4 IMĀM AL-ḤASAN'S (ʿA) BRAVERY. 338
Activity 2.4a: Review Questions 343
Activity 2.4b: Wisdom in Speech 345

2.5 IMĀM AL-ḤUSAYN'S (ʿA) SUPPORTIVE CHARACTER 348
Activity 2.5a: 352
Worksheet 2.5b 353

2.6 IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD'S (ʿA) EARLY YEARS 354
Activity 2.6a: Review Questions 357
Worksheet 2.6b: A Personal Du'ā 358

2.7 IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD (ʿA) IN SHĀM 360
Activity 2.7a: Comic Strip 364

2.8 IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD (ʿA): REFORMING HEARTS 368
Activity 2.6a: A Timeline of Imāmah 372
Activity 2.6b: Analyze a Du'ā from Aṣ-ṢaḥīfahAs-Sajjādīyyah 373

2.9 IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S (ʿA) EARLY YEARS 376
Activity 2.9a: Review Questions 380
Activity 2.9b: Examining their Intentions 381

2.10 IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S (ʿA) IMĀMAH 382
Activity 2.10a: Companions of Knowledge 385
Activity 2.10b: An Expert Bowman 387

2.11 IMĀM AL-MAHDĪ (ʿAJ) 388
Vocabulary Activity 2.11a 388
Activity 2.11b: 391
Activity 2.11c: Waiting for my Imām (ʿaj) 392

Chapter 3: History of Prophets

3.1 PROPHET ĀDAM (ʿA), THE FIRST HUMAN BEING 396
Activity 3.1a: Class Discussion 401
Activity 3.1b: Review Questions 402
Activity 3.1c: Review Questions 403

3.2 PROPHET NŪḤ'S (ʿA) PERSEVERANCE 404
Activity 3.2a: The Perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) 409
Activity 3.2b: Duʿā of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) 410
Activity 3.2c: Review Questions 411

Chapter 4: Contemporary Muslims

4.1 OUR ʿULAMĀʾ 414
Worksheet 4.1a: Tafsir Qurʾān bil Qurʾān 419

AKHLĀQ (ETIQUETTE)

Chapter 1: Mind, Body and Soul

1.1 PRACTICALLY ACHIEVING OUR PURPOSE 426
Activity 1.1a: Achieving Our Goals (Part 1) 430
Activity 1.1a: Achieving Our Goals (Part 2) 431
Activity 1.1b: Reflection 432

1.2 BALANCE AND MODERATION 434
Activity 1.2a: My Strategies for Being Balanced 438
Activity 1.2b: Review Questions 439

1.3 SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE 440
Activity 1.3a: Scenarios 446
Activity 1.3b: My Strategies for Maintaining a Real Perspective 447

Chapter 2: Spiritual Diseases

2.1 ANGER AND FORBEARANCE 450
Activity 2.1: My Strategies for Anger 454

2.2 GREED VS. CONTENTMENT 456
Activity 2.2: My Strategies for Battling Greed 459

Chapter 3: Family and Friendships

3.1 BEING GOOD TO PARENTS 462
Activity 3.1: Being Good to my Parents. 466

3.2 TRUE FRIENDSHIP. 468
Activity 3.2a: Components of a True Friendship. 469
Activity 3.2b: Scenarios and Review Questions 473

Chapter 4: Relationships and Etiquettes

4.1 THE BEST SPEECH. 476
Activity 4.1a: Draw and Reflect. 480
Activity 4.1b: Questions and Reflection 481

4.2 LYING AND HONESTY 484
Activity 4.2a: Read and Discuss 487
Activity 4.2b: Review Questions. 491

4.3 TRUSTS AND PROMISES. 492
Activity 4.3a: Scenarios 497
Activity 4.3b: Skits Bonus Activity 497

Chapter 5: Media and Entertainment

5.1 ENTERTAINMENT IN OUR LIVES 500
Activity 5.1: Dividing My Day. 505

5.2 MEDIA LITERACY 506
Activity 5.2: Researching News Sources. 512

ʿAQĀʾID
(BELIEFS)

CHAPTER 1

Why Religion?

1.1 Purpose of Human Beings

1.2 Need for Religion

1.3 Islam: the Best Religion

1.1 Purpose of Human Beings

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn what the purpose of human beings is
- Learn the 3 tools that will help us reach our purpose
- Learn about how ʿibādah helps us reach our purpose

HOOK ACTIVITY:
What types of words/ thoughts/phrases come to mind when we hear the term purpose? Create a word-web with the word "purpose"

THINK ALOUD: How can you define purpose in your own words? Provide an example of something that has a purpose. For example, your purpose in most sporting activities is to score a goal.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM: PART 1

THE MYSTERIOUS GARDEN

Ibrahim had just come home from soccer practice, where his team was getting ready for the big 7th-grade match, so he fell asleep as soon as his head touched his pillow. Later, he woke up in a complete daze, confused and unsure of where he was or how he had gotten there. "Where am I?" he thought to himself. He sat up, rubbed his eyes, and blinked. He pinched himself. "Ouch!" He was definitely awake.

Ibrahim stood up, overwhelmed with the scent of flowers, the buzzing of the bees, and the sound of the wind. He definitely wasn't in his bedroom anymore. Had he fallen asleep in a park somewhere? All of the small sounds surrounding him seemed amplified--more vibrant and intense than he remembered them. It was as if everything around him was trying to tell him something really important. He began to roam around, trying to discover an answer to this mystery he suddenly found himself in.

Ibrahim walked around observing his surroundings. All of a sudden, he banged his face into a glass wall that seemed to pop up out of nowhere. "Ouch!" he cried out in pain, gingerly checking his head to make sure he wasn't bleeding. His eyes caught the glint of light reflecting from the pane in front of him. Still processing this crystalline barrier, his eyes scanned around him, looking for the end-point. There didn't appear to be one no matter how much he turned. Where did these glass walls come from? Ibrahim looked around. His eyes widened as he realized that he was trapped inside the glass walls! Ibrahim started to pace back and forth in nervousness when he noticed a piece of paper crinkling under his foot.

"*Dear person,*" it read, "*You're only here for a short while. In this garden, you will find everything you need to get the keys to help you escape the glass walls. Good luck!*"

Ibrahim continued to walk around the garden. He thought to himself, "Where could I be? Why am I here? What is on the other side of the glass?"

As he continued to roam around trying to avoid the expansive glass walls, (which was harder than it looked), he tripped over a huge rock and fell flat on his face amidst a field of tulips. Grateful for the soft landing, he looked up at the tulips in front of him. These tulips, in particular, were an odd shade though; they seemed to have lines on them… or were those letters? "*Words* written on a *tulip*?" He thought quizzically.

Ibrahim sat up and looked closely at the tulips, picking one of them off of its stem. Holding it in his hand, he took apart one of the flowers and carefully studied the petals. There was a message written on the petals: "Who created you? What purpose were you made for?" The oddity of the situation was not lost on Ibrahim though he began to think about the questions posed on the tulip. He hadn't truly contemplated these questions before. "Hmm, this might be a clue! It probably has something to do with how I can get out of this strange place," he thought, and after seeing the petals, he really wanted to know.

Suddenly, Ibrahim heard his stomach make a noise, and he felt the thirst itching his throat. He saw a stream in the distance and hurried towards it, only to bump into another glass wall! "Ouch!" Ibrahim rubbed his head. He had to escape these walls; it was the only way that he could find water to drink and survive. He was sure that whoever had sent the message was trying to help him to find a way out, and to find something more meaningful beyond these glass walls.

THINK ALOUD: Walls are often used in narratives to represent what concept(s)? In your own words, explain the moral message of the story. Explain how the story of Ibrahim relates to us finding our purpose?

VOCABULARY ACTIVITY:
Draw a map with the words 'ibādah, qurb, purpose, and dīn. Where does everything go on the map? What is your destination? What obstacles do you face on the way?

DĪN:
Religion, way of life

'IBĀDAH:
Worship, an action that is done with the intention of getting closer to Allah (swt)

QURB:
closeness to Allah (swt)

PERFECTION:
being our best selves and reaching qurb

PURPOSE:
the reason for which something exists, or is done, made, and used.

OUR PURPOSE AS HUMAN BEINGS

In this story, Ibrahim is trying to figure out where he is and what his purpose is. The **purpose** is defined as "the reason for which something exists, or is done, made, and used." This extends to all creatures in existence: from the seed that turns into a fruit tree to the bee that pollinates flowers. Everything has a purpose—including us!

When we come into this world, we have to find what our purpose is and fulfill it.

If we know that everything has a purpose, we might begin to ask ourselves, "What is our purpose as human beings?" In the story, Ibrahim found a clue asking him what his purpose was, which motivates him to act in certain ways. This is like the world we live in. Our purpose in life is to reach perfection, which in Islam means to become as close as possible to Allah (swt) Qurb-ilāhi — closeness to Allah in Arabic.

As Shīʿah Muslims, we believe that we can reach the point of making the most perfect decisions in all situations. We pray that Allah (swt) will always help us because He is the All-Perfect, so we should never stop striving to get close to Him.

Even though the teachings of the Qur'an and the Divine guides have a special role in guiding us, things that happen in our life or that we see in the world around us can also guide us toward Allah (swt).

In previous years, we have talked about various proofs of Allah's (swt) existence. Allah (swt) is the All-Perfect and the All-Knowledgeable and created us with the purpose of becoming our best selves through Islam. After using these and other such proofs, we come to the realization that our life must have some purpose, and this purpose must come from our All-Perfect Creator—Allah (swt). Similarly, we have talked about how an All-Generous, All-Merciful Creator gave us divine guides, like the Prophets and Imāms.

Allah (swt) has given us three tools to reach Him and perfect ourselves:
1. **ʿIbādah:** Worship
2. **Ibtilā':** Tests and being tested
3. **Maʿrifah:** Deep Understanding

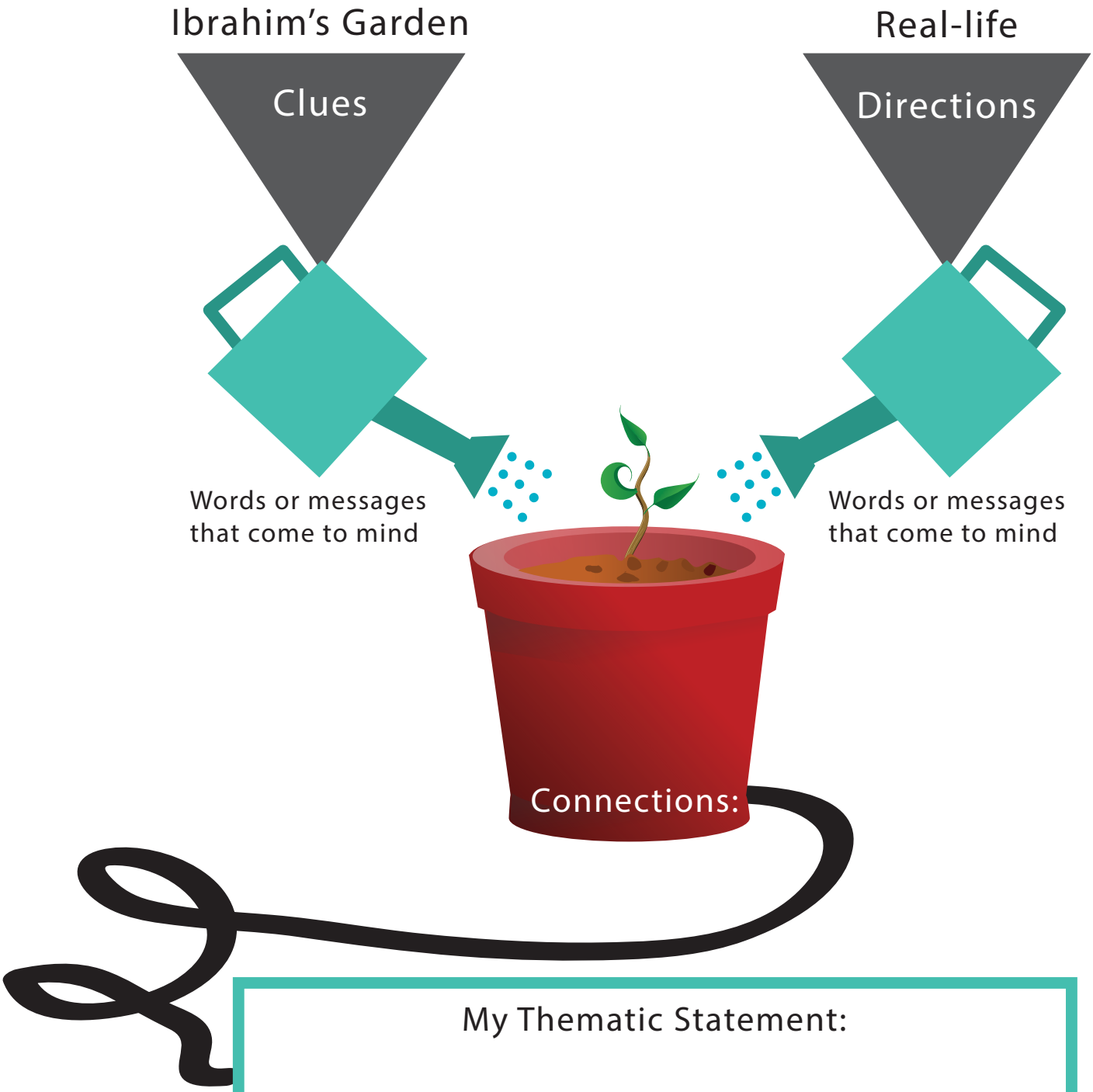
Extension Activity: The Resolution

1. Ibrahim's story ends in a cliffhanger; if you were given creative liberties to resolve the predicament Ibrahim has found himself in, how would you end his story? What could help Ibrahim break free of his glass prison?

FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING

2. Compare: How do the clues Ibrahim received in the strange garden relate to the directions we have been given in our lives? Summarize the analogies present in the story into a thematic statement.

Analogy Generator



My Thematic Statement:

GETTING CLOSER TO ALLAH: THE FIRST STEPS

Our purpose — qurb or closeness to Allah (swt) — can only be found through the path that Allah (swt) Himself has defined because we believe that He is our Creator, the All-Perfect, and All-Merciful. Who knows what is best for us other than Allah (swt)? If we believe Allah (swt) is All-Knowledgeable and cares for us more than anyone else, then we know that the way to gaining closeness to Him can only be through doing what He likes and knows what is best for us — by following the dīn.

We all need Allah (swt), our Creator, to survive, and we need to become closer to Him to reach our purpose. The path to perfection means acting in the way that He likes and staying away from what He dislikes, which is how we practice the first step to perfection, ʻIbādah — worshiping Allah (swt). Serving Allah (swt) helps us become our best selves because He knows what is best for us.

As we try to reach perfection, we need to get rid of the barriers of negative qualities and to fill our souls with goodness, good character, and deeds.

As we try to reach perfection, we need to get rid of the barriers of negative qualities and to fill our souls with goodness, good character, and deeds.

QUICK WRITE: What is one thing that you can add to your personal characteristics that may take you closer to reaching perfection in the eyes of Allah (swt)?

Story Connection:
These negative qualities are like the glass walls; sometimes, they are hard to see or detect, but they are obstacles that stop us from fulfilling our true purpose in life. This is why we must reflect on ourselves and our actions.

When we make good choices out of obedience to Allah (swt), He helps us by granting us a special Mercy, bringing us closer to Him (qurb), and allowing us to reach higher levels in Jannah. The Prophet (ṣ) has told us that this world is like a farm for us to plant our good deeds so that we will see the fruits of our labor in the next world.

To help us fulfill our purpose of getting closer to Him, Allah (swt) has said that **everything in this world** was created to help us:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

It is He [Allah] who created for you all that is in the earth.[1]

1 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Baqarah, 2:29

This āyah shows us how Allah (swt) has made everything in this world at our service to help us reach our purpose. Human beings have a unique potential to reach perfection, and everything was created to help us reach this potential. The best way for food and water to be used is to serve the believer. When we drink water for energy to better serve Allah (swt), the water is helping us serve our purpose.

ʿIBĀDAH: A MEANS TO REACHING PERFECTION

Allah (swt), our All-Merciful and All-Wise Creator has given us the tools to reach our purpose of perfection. In the Qurʾān, He clearly states that He has only created us to do ʿibādah:

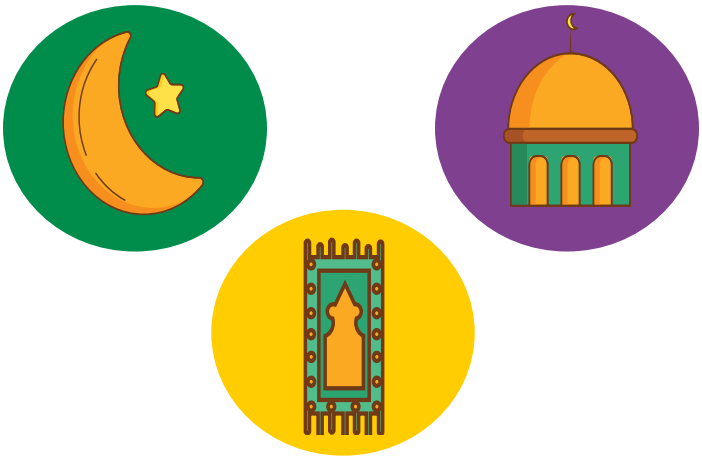
وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

I have not created jinn and humans except to worship me.[2]

ʿIbādah (عبادة), or worship, is any action that is done with the intention of getting closer to Allah (swt). When we think of ʿibādah, the first thing that we usually think of is the regular acts of worship we have been taught, such as praying, fasting, and giving charity. The wājib acts of worship are the most important acts because not doing them will keep us from getting further on this path to perfection.

Think of it like a game where making a mistake causes you to take steps back. If you keep making mistakes, you'll always be stuck on the same level!

THINK ALOUD: Identify: What games do you know that work like this?



Extension Activity

Design your own board game using the vocabulary and concepts in this lesson (ʿibādah, qurb, purpose, and dīn).

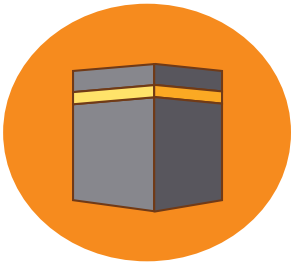
- What would be the starting point for your game? What is the objective?
- How about the destination or endpoint?
- Are there any rewards or prizes along the way or at the end?
- How might opportunities or obstacles hinder or further your progress?

These acts of worship play an important role in helping us achieve perfection and are things that Allah (swt) has encouraged us to do. Our first responsibility is to learn what is wājib and ḥāram, especially in our daily actions. For example, we need to learn how to offer ṣalāh, how to observe ḥijāb, and how to fast.

And every action in our lives can also be ʿibādah! If we do everything with the intention of getting closer to Allah (swt), then every one of our actions becomes a form of ʿibādah that can help us get closer to Allah (swt).

Think about how important Allah (swt) is supposed to be to us. He created us, and he knows us best! If we are trying to please Him and be close to Him, then all of our actions should align with what He wants.

For example, if we develop healthy eating and sleeping habits so that we have the strength to get closer to Allah (swt), this is a form of ʿibādah. Another form of ʿibādah is when we are kind to our family and friends, even during disagreements, to please Allah (swt). Even being conscious of what we look at and who we surround ourselves with can be a form of ʿibādah. Usually, we think about having good intentions, but the more important question is, do we have God-conscious intentions? In essence, these are the same thing because everything that is good comes from what is good in God's eyes.



2 *Noble Qurʾān*, Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:56

DO NOW:

What are some more everyday examples of ʿibādah that you can think of? Look at the chart below and checkmark all of the ones that you do regularly. Now, record one everyday form of ʿibādah that you would like to add to your routine.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLES OF ʿIBĀDAH	
Healthy eating and sleeping habits	
Kind to our family and friends, even during disagreements	
Conscious of what we look at and who we surround ourselves with	

Performing ʿibādah (actions commanded by Allah (swt)) with the intention of pleasing Allah (swt) is the definition of a good deed. In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) states that humans are in loss except for those who perform these good deeds while having faith in Him.

In Sūrah Al-ʿAṣr, Allah (swt)says:

وَٱلْعَصْرِ ﴿1﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِى خُسْرٍ ﴿2﴾ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

I swear by time! Certainly, human beings are in loss, except those who have faith and do good deeds.[3]

The only way for us to be successful and achieve our purpose is by having faith and performing good deeds. By doing this, we will slowly be moving closer towards achieving our purpose!

3 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-ʿAṣr, 103:1-3

Summary Questions

1. Recall: What directions are given to us to reach our purpose?

2. Explain: how does purpose relate to the qurb (closeness) to Allah?

3. Explain: how can we make our daily actions into ʿibādah?

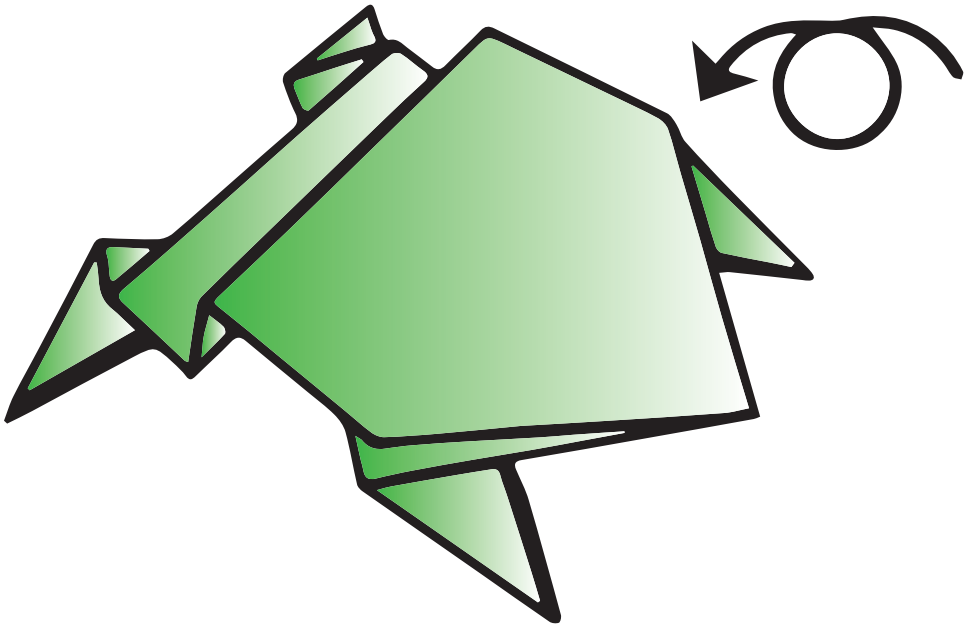
NOTES

1.2 Need for Religion

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize that religion fulfills human needs
- Learn about the origins and purpose of religion
- Learn why every person needs to investigate to find a way of life
- Learn the connection between our purpose and religion
- Learn about the two guides: ʿaql and fiṭrah and examine their roles in guiding us towards closeness with Allah (swt)
- Focus on how our internal and external guides (ʿaql and fiṭrah) helps us find Allah (swt)
- Learn how our fiṭrah can be hidden/covered

QUICK WRITE ACTIVITY: Your job is to create an origami jumping frog. You will receive a piece of origami paper. You have five minutes to create the same frog that is pictured below. Then, answer the questions below.



1. Were you successful at creating the frog?

2. How easy or difficult was it to create the frog?

3. What would have made it easier for you to create the frog?

4. How do you think this activity relates to our need for religion?

Story Recap:

Ibrahim is a young boy who wakes up in a garden locked in by glass walls. He has been given a message that told him to question his purpose.

Vocabulary:

ʿAql: Intellect

Fiṭrah: Our innate God-seeking nature

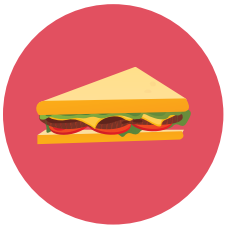
IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 2: THE GLASS WALLS

Ibrahim's head was throbbing after hitting the glass wall so many times. He pressed his face against the glass wall, looking longingly at the stream behind it. It was so close, yet so unattainable. He knew that he had to get there, but he wasn't sure how. There was a way out--there had to be, but he was overwhelmed with all of the different things around him and how little he understood them. He had tried several ways to get to the other side, but none of them had worked.

He had stood on a rock and climbed up a tree, trying to throw himself over, but the glass walls were too high. He had tried walking around them, but the glass walls seemed to go on endlessly. Exasperated, he started to throw rocks at them, hoping that they would somehow shatter. But it seemed they were bullet-proof; they did not shatter, and nothing worked. *"There has to be a way!"* Ibrahim thought to himself. "This would be so much easier if I had clear instructions or somebody to just show me the way!" He thought about the bookshelf he built with his father just the week before, and how they used instructions. He wished that this had instructions too.

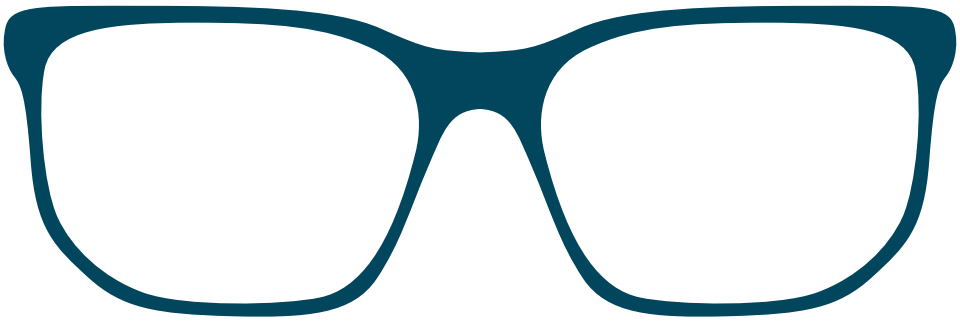
Looking through the glass wall, Ibrahim was shocked! He noticed an old man in the distance near the stream, holding a huge bottle of water. This man had gotten the water that Ibrahim needed, so it was possible to get to the stream. If only the old man could show him the way, Ibrahim could be successful, too. "Maybe the old man had been sent to help me," Ibrahim thought to himself.

"Hey!" Ibrahim screamed, waving his arms, desperately trying to get the old man's attention. "I need your help to get the water!" The man didn't look up at Ibrahim, despite the commotion that he was making. Ibrahim started to bang on the glass and continued to yell. The man was either hard of hearing, or the glass-walls were sound-proof, and the man simply couldn't hear him!



Ibrahim was growing desperate; he didn't know which direction to go in, so he started to run frantically along the glass wall, not really paying attention to where he was going. When he stopped to catch his breath, he saw a shiny wrapper partially buried in the ground. He started to dig for it, thinking it may contain some food or water. After trying for a bit, he saw that it was empty, and when he looked up, he realized that he had completely lost sight of the old man. The stream now seemed even further away!

Ibrahim sighed and sat down on a rock, wiping away the beads of sweat that had appeared on his forehead. He stared hopelessly at the grass in front of him. The grass looked so odd—parts of it were burned, and other parts were lush and green. "What is this place?" he thought. He looked again and suddenly realized that a message had been burned into the grass. It said, "Wear the glasses." He had been so involved with the wrapper that he had missed the message! The message confused him more, but he wanted to get out of the glass enclosure. But, how would glasses help him? He didn't really understand, but at least now he knew what to look for: glasses.



DO NOW: In 60 seconds, make a list of games, activities, or events that would not be possible without a proper and/or thorough set of instructions.

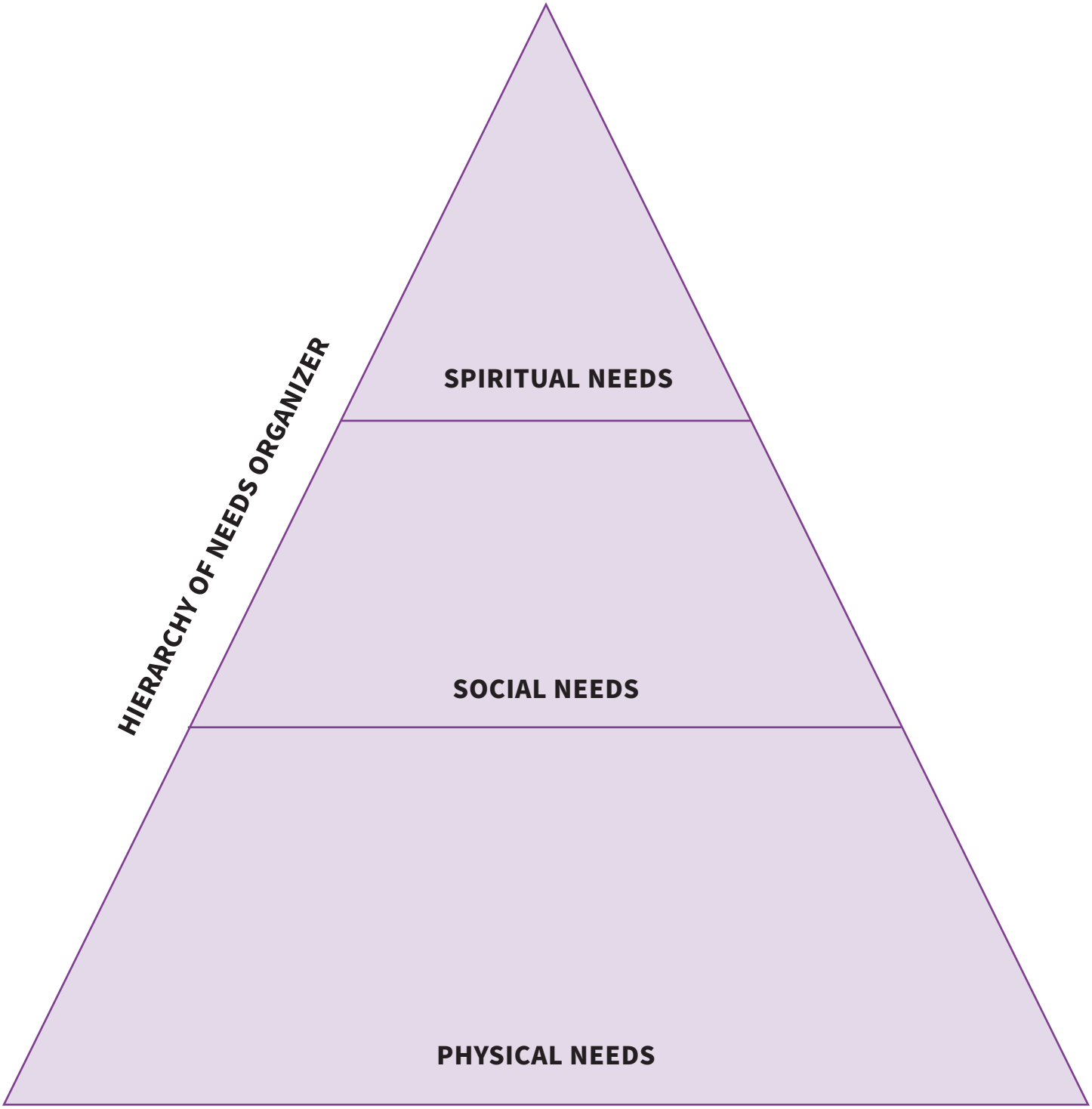
WHAT IS RELIGION?

All religions are composed of two parts: beliefs and practices. In order to be a true follower of any religion, we must understand why we follow the religion that we do.

As humans, we have three types of needs: physical needs, social/emotional needs, and other higher/spiritual needs. Physical needs are those needs that are necessary for our survival, like food, water, and shelter. Social/emotional needs include our need to communicate with family and friends, the need to be cared for and things that are essential for a society to function, like laws, leaders, and governments. Finally, higher or spiritual needs are those that our souls need to thrive, like knowing our purpose and having a meaningful way to live our lives. These spiritual needs are part of our consciousness and essence as human beings and are what set us apart from animals.

Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs

There is an abundance of guidance within the Qurʾān or ḥadīth to help us best fulfill our various needs. Read through the selection of āyāt or ḥadīths listed over the next few pages and copy them into the graphic organizer under the coinciding tiers of human needs that each excerpt addresses; alternatively, you may place the excerpt number in the corresponding tier.



Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs Continued...

The following Qurʾānic and ḥadīth examples relate to the three types of human needs: physical needs, social/emotional needs, and other higher/spiritual needs. Using the numbering system, place the excerpts into the related tier of the Hierarchy of Needs organizer:

From the Qur'ān:

1. Allah (swt) has recommended us to "eat what is lawful and good in the Earth."[1]

2. The following foods are beneficial to our health: honey,[2] vegetables such as corn and herbs,[3,4] and fruits such as olives, dates, grapes, pomegranates,[5] and bananas.[6]

3. Allah (swt) has also recommended us to eat the meat of certain animals and their milk, as well as fresh fish and birds; "He created cattle for you, wherein is warmth and many gains, and you eat thereof."[7,8]

4. References advocating physical activity can be inferred from the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions, which share the common theme of maintaining respect for the body: "Do not with your own hands throw yourself into ruin."[9]

5. Prosperous is he who purifies the soul and failed has he who soils it with sin and impurity.[10]

1 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Baqarah, 2:168
2 *Noble Qurʾān*, An-Naḥl, 16:68-69
3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ar-Raḥmān, 55:12
4 *Noble Qurʾān,* ʿAbasa, 80: 27-32
5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Anʿām, 6:99,141
6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Wāqiʿah, 56:28-33
7 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Naḥl, 16:5
8 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Ḥajj, 22:28
9 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:195
10 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ash-Shams, 91:9-10

6. “But God has endeared to you faith, decking it fair in your hearts, and He has made detestable to you unbelief and ungodliness and disobedience.”[11]

7. Turn not your face from men in scorn and pride, and do not be indifferent towards them, and walk not in the earth exultantly, for God loves not any man proud and boastful.[12]

8. It is not piety that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to have faith in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, to give of one's substance, however cherished, to kinsmen, and orphans, the needy, the traveller, beggars, and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril, they are they who are true in their faith; these are the truly God-fearing.[13]

Examples from ḥadīth:

9. The Prophet (ṣ) has advised against overeating as identified by the ḥadīth: “Don’t indulge in overeating because it would quench the light of faith within your hearts.”[14]

10. Another frequently cited ḥadīth recommends that one should fill one-third of the stomach with food, one-third with water and one-third should be left empty.

11. It has been described that the Prophet (ṣ) and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) would refrain from eating bread from refined flour, and would rather eat that which contained barley and bran.[15]

11 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Ḥujurāt, 49:7

12 *Noble Qurʾān*, Luqmān, 31:18

13 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Baqarah, 2:177

14 *Al-Mustadrak ʿAlā aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥīn*, V. 3, P. 81

15 Iran English Radio. IRIB World Service [Internet]. Iran: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Service; c2011. Analysis; Articles; *Islam Nutrition and Health* Part 10; 2011 Feb-Jun.

Worksheet 1.2a: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs Continued...

12. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) has been reported as saying, “Don’t let your stomach become a graveyard for animals.”[16]

13. “Your body has a right over you,” and “A strong believer is better than a weak believer.”[17] Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) , in his historic directive addressed to Mālik al-Ashtar, says: “(O Mālik:) The good and the wicked must not be equal in your eyes, for otherwise it would discourage the good from good-doing and encourage the wicked in their misconduct. Treat them in accordance with the kind of conduct he has chosen for himself.”[18]

14. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), the Commander of the Faithful,, draws our attention to this point with an interesting metaphor. He says, “Be like the honeybee, which always drinks the purest of things (i.e. the nectar) and yields the purest of things and does not break any bough that it alights upon.”[19]

15. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said, “One who does not appreciate the good, unmingled, and sincere intentions of his friend will also not appreciate his services and acts of kindness.”[20]

16. The Eleventh Imām (ʿa) said: “The best of your friends are those who forget your inadequacies but never forget your kindness.”[21]

17. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) refers to this kind of loss and deprivation in the following saying, “One who does not thank for a favour will not find anything except deprivation and disappointment.”[22]

16 *Path of Light / Voie de la Lumiere* [Internet]. Canada: Canadian Islamic Center of Montreal; c2007. Islam and the Vegetarian Diet by Cyril Anderson.

17 Al Khayat MH. *The Right Path to Health: Health Education through Religion*; 9. Health as a Human Right in Islam. World Health Organisation Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean 2004 P. 11, 18, 21 [originally in Muslim]

18 *Idem. Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Penguin Books, 1975), trans. by R. Hollingdale J., P. 206.

19 Ghurar al-Ḥikam, P. 569

20 *Al-Amidi*, op. cit., P. 672

21 *Al-Amidi*, op. cit., P. 702

22 *Al-Amidi*, op. cit., P. 672

18. In the directive to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) points out the significance and benefits of appreciation: "(O Mālik) Attention to major matters should not make you neglect minor and less important ones, for the people benefit from your trivial services and acts of kindness in their own right, while they cannot do without your major services… Hence pay thorough attention to the demands and needs of the people. Pay compliments to those who take pains and do worthy work. For the tribute paid to them for their work gives enthusiasm to the brave and serves as a constant source of their motivation. This practice also helps motivate conservative and timid persons and draws them to the field of battle."[23]

19. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said: "At the beginning obtain self control through abstention from sins and vices. Then it will be easier for you to habituate yourself of the obedience and service of God."[24]

20. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said: "Acquire control over yourself by abandoning (bad) habits and fight your desires so that they become subject to the power of your will."[25]

23 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, V.2, P. 87
24 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 508
25 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 508

ORIGIN OF RELIGION

Muslims believe that religion—and the worldview that comes with it—began with the very first human being, who was the Prophet Ādam (ʿa). Throughout history, every Messenger sent by Allah has explained the religion and worldview that human beings should have. It has been the same core message from the beginning consisting of three principles:

1) Belief in the One and Only God who created us and sustains us

2) Belief in the Prophets and the message they bring to us as a way of life

3) Belief in the hereafter being our ultimate destination

WHY SHOULD WE INVESTIGATE RELIGION?

Some people may have the question, "Why investigate religion at all?"

Story Connection:

We see in the story of Ibrahim, he is constantly trying to look for answers because he is trapped and needs water. For Ibrahim, the need to find a way to the water was pressing. If he decided to ignore this need or to prioritize other things above it, he might face fatal consequences. On the other hand, the pleasure he would experience if he could get water is enough to make him continue to look for answers. Similarly, we are naturally searching for answers as human beings.

There are some simple reasons why all humans should look into religion. All creatures want to save themselves from even the potential that they will be harmed. Imagine a very little child comes knocking on your door and tells you that there is a fire down the street, and if you do not leave your house and help, it will burn the entire neighborhood! How would you react?

THINK ALOUD: If this happened to you, would you go and investigate the fire, even if you did not know the child?

Now, imagine that someone you knew came to your door to warn you of the fire. Imagine that this person was very trustworthy and truthful. Everything else you knew about them was good. You would likely be more inclined to believe them.

Just like the fire in the neighborhood, we have been sent warnings of the hereafter.

Allah (swt) sent us pious and trustworthy Prophets to warn us of the consequences to our actions, so, at the very least, we need to look into their teachings and warnings. Although many people get distracted in life and forget to look into the more important issues in life, like religion, there are actually many benefits to believing in religion.

Story Connection:

In the story, Ibrahim finds a wrapper and thinks it may contain something useful. Even when he gets it out of the ground, he realizes it is empty and only serves to distract him from his eventual goal. If he had paid more attention to his surroundings, he could have avoided the distraction.

Often, we look to celebrities as examples of those living an ideal life. These humans seem to have it all: wealth, talent, popularity, and even the admiration of many people. Some misguided people even idolize celebrities; however, it is no secret that if you analyze celebrities and their lives objectively, there is v ery little to envy.

THINK ALOUD: Do you think celebrities are happy with all the money and fame that they have? Do you think they are completely satisfied in their lives?

We see that many celebrities and other people with wealth and fame are not satisfied, even if they have everything that they could want in the world. The physical comforts that they have do not lead to complete satisfaction, and often, these individuals are the unhappiest. Celebrities often deal with harsh rejections, depression, lack of privacy and dysfunctional relationships with loved ones. This could be because they do not realize they have a higher purpose, and are pursuing temporary pleasures such as fame and money.

Religion can connect people to their higher purpose, and gives them the path to success in this world and the hereafter. It also helps them to see beyond the superficial comforts of this world. We will see in the section below why we need religion to fulfill our spiritual needs and dictate the best ways of fulfilling our other needs.

THE NEED FOR RELIGION

Religion is an all-encompassing tool that helps us fulfill our higher, spiritual needs, and also shows us the best way to fulfill our physical and social needs.

As we established in the last lesson, we have the best of purposes, which is to become as close as we can to Allah (swt) through serving Him. But how can we serve Allah (swt)? What should we do?

Story connection:
Think about Ibrahim in the story: he knows that he needs water to survive and that there's something more going on, maybe even a higher purpose, but he doesn't know how to get there or what to do. As he tries to figure things out and overcome the obstacles that he's facing, he realizes that he needs help and instructions to show him what to do.

Just like Ibrahim, we need instructions and guidelines.

When trying to find these guidelines, we have three possible options:

- Following our own opinions and desires: this option will lead us down the wrong path because we usually focus on our short-term desires and ignore our long-term benefits. Also, we have very limited knowledge of the world.
- Following the opinions and ideas of other human beings who follow their own opinions and desires: this option will also lead us down the wrong path because the people we follow also have limited knowledge and may be influenced by their own desires.
- Following the instructions provided by our Creator and Sustainer, which are passed to us through our intellect and through the Prophets and Imāms: this set of instructions comes to us in the form of the divinely sent religion of Islam, which was taught by all prophets and perfected with the last of the Prophets (ṣ).

The rest of this lesson will explore the inner guide that we have towards Islam.

OUR GUIDES- FIṬRAH AND ʻAQL (INTERNAL)

Fiṭrah

Once, a man came to Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) and asked him about how he may get to know Allah.

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) asked if the man ever had an experience where his ship was in danger and about to sink.

The man had experienced this, and so the Imām (ʿa) asked, "In that moment, did your heart feel a sense of a strong power, which made you feel like someone would help you?"

The man answered, "Yes!"

The Imām (ʿa) continued, "This feeling of hope and power that overcomes all humans in times of danger and need, the feeling of support and strength given to all, is the presence of Allah (swt) the All-Powerful. He is the only One in those places, when there is no one else to save you. Thus, you must always be hopeful of Him. He is always there and He is the one who provides safety and security for all of humanity. He is Allah (swt), the Greatest."

Human beings have been created in a way that we know of Allah and want to get closer to Him. At a very basic level, we also have intuition about what is right and wrong. This is called our **fiṭrah** and is referred to in the Qur'ān:

فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

The fiṭrah of Allah (swt), upon which He made mankind…"[26]

We don't need to be taught the knowledge of the fiṭrah because it's part of the way we've been created. However, we do need to make sure we don't get distracted from this knowledge, and that this knowledge grows deeper throughout our lives. This is why Allah has blessed us with another internal guide known as the ʿaql.

26 *Noble Qurʾān*, Ar-Rūm, 30:30

Aql

The other internal guide which Allah (swt) has blessed us with is our intellect and our ability to use reason and logic. When we observe the incredible precision and beauty in the world around us, our intellect immediately realises that there must be a Wise and Merciful Creator who created this for our benefit.

وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ {5}

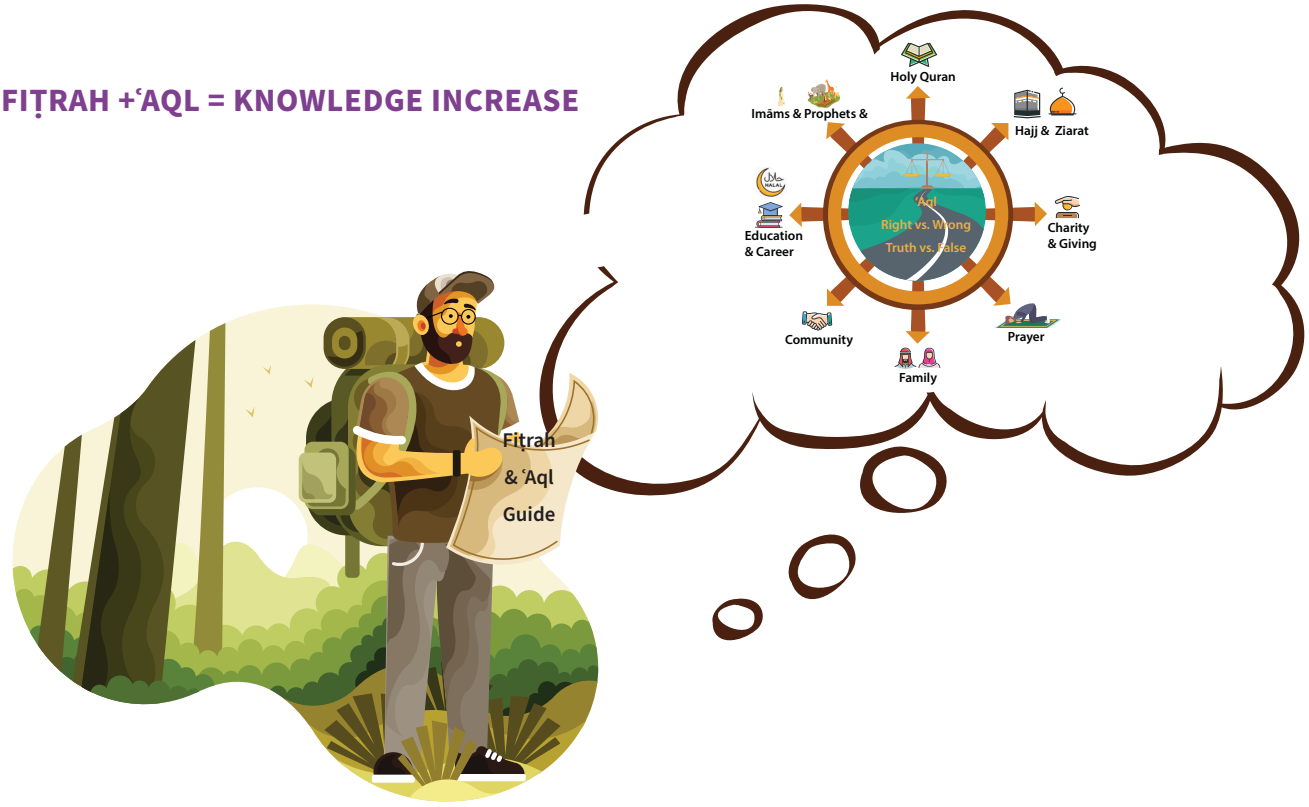
"And (in) the variation of the night and the day, and (in) what Allah sends down of sustenance from the skies, then gives life thereby to the earth after its death, and (in) the changing of the winds, there are signs for a people who understand (use their 'aql)."[27]

Allah (swt) has blessed us with these two internal guides: the **ʿaql** (**عقل**), intellect, and the **fiṭrah** (**فطرة**), our innate God-seeking nature.

Our *fiṭrah* leads us towards goodness, and *ʿaql* helps us differentiate right from wrong and increase the knowledge we have about the good and the bad. The combination of these two internal guides can help us in the sense that we will have a good, healthy conscience, which will also help us make good choices.

Our *ʿaql* is limited, and there are certain realities that we would not be able to reach on our own without Allah (swt) sending us Prophets, the Qurʾān, and Imāms to explain what is best to us.

FIṬRAH +ʿAQL = KNOWLEDGE INCREASE



27 *Noble Qurʿān*, Al-Jāthiyah, 45:5

NEED FOR GUIDANCE TO RELIGION

THINK ALOUD INFER: If Allah (swt) is All-Knowing, then would He leave us without directions?

Our *fiṭrah* can also help us to some degree to know, intuitively, what is right and wrong. But if we make bad choices, we can corrupt our *fiṭrah,* and we can lose our ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

We can cover our *fiṭrah* when we commit sins. This is like Ibrahim's glass walls. We might not realize that there is a barrier, but it is there and it's blocking us from reaching our destination! Our *fiṭrah* and *ʿaql* give us general direction, but they do not spell out things for us clearly or give us detailed instructions.

Outside societal influences can work against our fiṭrah and may cause us to ignore our intellect. For this reason, when people want to be "good," without following the guidelines of religion, they will not be able to reach their higher purpose and achieve closeness to Allah (swt).

Allah (swt) is the one who created us with a certain purpose and has given us the instructions--the religion of Islam--to get us to where we need to go. These instructions come to us through external guides, such as the Prophets and Imāms and the Qurʾān. They have received instructions from Allah (swt), and then taught us the guidelines necessary for us to reach our purpose. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ

"He [Allah] is the one who has sent His messenger with guidance and the true religion."[28]

Story connection:
Think about Ibrahim in the story. He has his intellect, and he knows where he needs to go, but there are so many things he does not know. Without instructions, he isn't clear about what he should do—except that he needs to rely on someone else to give him those instructions!

28 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-Fatḥ, 48:28

Homework 1.2b:

There are many distractions in the world around us that may cover our fiṭrah; likewise, there are many everyday opportunities to reconnect with our *fiṭrah* and increase our love of Allah (swt) and His religion. In the table below, list some examples of distractions or social influences which could cover your *fiṭrah* as well as some measures we can take to reconnect to our *fiṭrah.*

THINGS THAT COVER OUR FIṬRAH	THINGS THAT HELP US RECONNECT TO OUR FIṬRAH

CONCLUSION

Once we have understood our need for religion, we must strengthen our beliefs and practices through the instructions that Allah (swt) has given us. If our purpose is to become as close to the All-Perfect and All-Just Creator, then only Allah (swt) can tell us how to do this.

1.3 Islam: the Best Religion

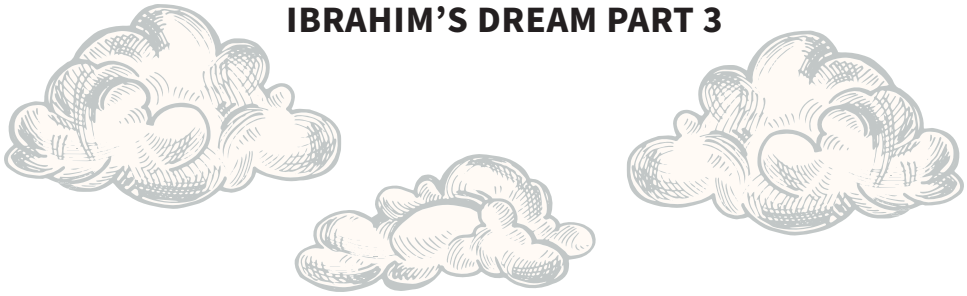
OBJECTIVES:

- Review the origins and purpose of religion
- Learn why every person needs to investigate to find a way of life
- Learn why Islam is unchanged and timeless
- Learn why Islam is the most advanced religion
- Learn about how Islam is a complete way of life

HOOK ACTIVITY: With a partner, create a list of things (needs, hopes, lifestyles) that you might have in common with a person who lived 1000 years ago, what about differences? Do people need guidance beyond those things that all humans have in common? Is it possible to address every person's needs across time and place?

Story Recap:

Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He has seen various messages giving him clues, and he is now trying to find a pair of glasses; this was the most recent clue that he was mysteriously informed about.



A NEW CHALLENGE

It was almost mid-day, and the sun's heat was overpowering. He continued his search for the pair of glasses that the message burned into the grass had told him to find. These glasses had to be the key to get him to the other side, to the water that would sustain him. He thought to himself, "Who was helping me and sending me all of these messages? Who had put me here?" This world was such a mystery to him, but he knew there had to be answers. There had to be a way to get to the other side, to get to that water. He knew what he needed to do, but he just did not know how to find these glasses. Ibrahim looked up at the sky and started to wonder about this world.

"I want to know You better, the one who created all of this. Why is all of this here?" Ibrahim thought.

He continued to look up at the sky and watched the clouds rolling by. There were a few birds flying above him. One of them flew down and perched itself onto the tree next to him, looking at him. Ibrahim felt strange.

The bird started pecking the branch that it was sitting on. The branches on this tree were an odd shape. They folded into circles and kind of looked like…glasses? Ibrahim looked again carefully. The branches were twisted into various circles and did

resemble glasses, but there was something else *in* the tree! Ibrahim looked closer and realized that there were at least a dozen pairs of glasses on the tree! He had finally found them and wanted to yell with excitement!

Ibrahim stood up and started to climb the tree, grabbing onto every pair of glasses he could find but realized that they all looked different. Some of them were small, others had really foggy lenses, and there were even some that came in different colors. “But if they’re all different, how do I know which ones are the right glasses?” he wondered. Gathering all of them, he climbed down the tree, and began trying them on. The first pair was small. The next pair had frames, but no lenses. Ibrahim was getting flustered; none of these were right. Ibrahim thought to himself that the glasses had to be a pair that fit, had lenses, and were intact so that he could actually use them. The glasses that would lead him the right way couldn’t be these broken ones with missing pieces!

Next, Ibrahim picked up a pair of bright pink glasses. They were chipped but still in wearable condition. When he put them on, he was amazed.

The garden was glittering with magic. He was mesmerized with the garden’s beauty. For nearly an hour, he just looked at the majestic garden through this pair of pink glasses.

Yet, as he looked toward the sky, he remembered the bird that guided him towards the glasses, and that he was looking for a way *out*. He had lost track of what he was supposed to be doing! Even though this pair was really fascinating, it wasn’t helping him get to the water source on the other side of the glass. He had even forgotten that he was thirsty. He took off the pink pair of glasses and sighed, looking down at his pile of misfit glasses.

The next pair in the pile was light blue; the handles were askew but they had lenses and fit. He put them on and looked around. The garden looked the same, but there was something else he noticed. He could now see something faint on the glass walls he was desperate to escape. With the rest of the glasses in his hand, he walked to the closest glass wall and stared at it. There was some type of writing on the wall, but it was blurry. The lenses on this pair weren’t strong enough to help him.

The next pair he tried on was black, ordinary — but when he put them on, his vision tripled. He could see very clearly that there was some type of message written on the glass wall like on a computer screen, but he couldn't read it clearly. So, he placed this pair in the discard pile too.

The second to last pair of glasses looked better, less scuffed than the others before it. As soon as he wore them, he saw the glass screen come alive. "Ibrahim, after you complete these tests, you will get to the other side, which is the real world. Make everything count. Press 'Enter' to continue." Ibrahim looked everywhere for the Enter button, but there was no such button anywhere to be seen.

A lightbulb went off in his mind. With this pair of glasses, Ibrahim could not *see* the Enter button. The garden had also become blurry; it was as though the glasses were ignoring the garden and the world around him.

He decided to try on the last pair of glasses, which seemed to be strong and sturdy, with a beautiful brown frame. They looked like someone wise would wear them. "Wasn't the old man I saw earlier wearing a pair of glasses just like these?" He put them on and couldn't believe how perfect they were! He could see the garden, the sky, and the glass screen. More importantly, a red 'Enter' button was clearly visible beneath the text he'd read earlier. Grinning from ear to ear, Ibrahim looked at the screen and confidently hit the "Enter" button on the glass screen.

All of a sudden, he heard the words "Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm" echo throughout the garden.

THINK ALOUD: If you were asked to write a test, who would you want to go over study material with? The person who has designed and will be grading the test or your classmates? Explain your choice.

INTRODUCTION

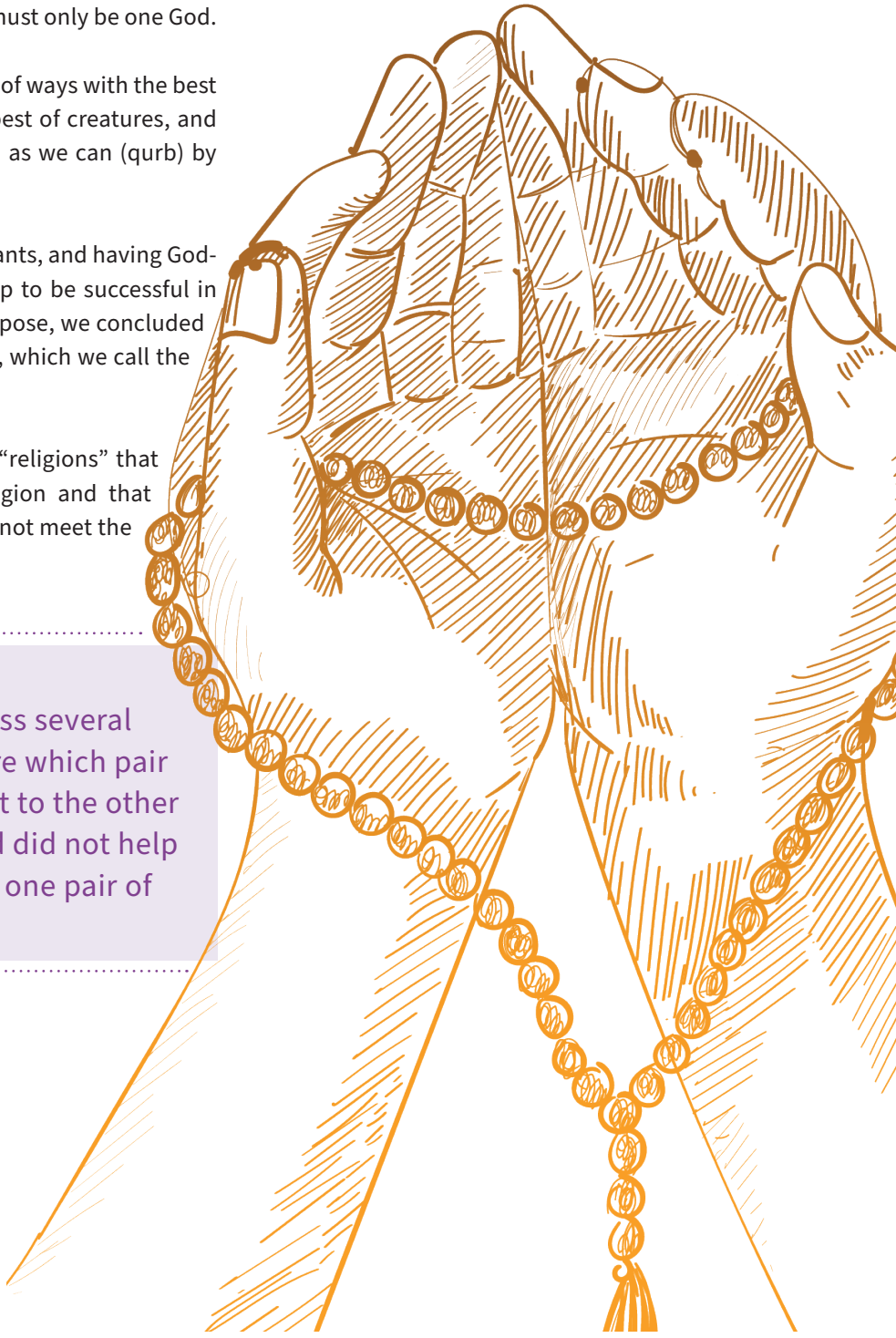
In our previous lessons, we talked about why, as humans, we need religion. We established that there must be a Creator, and He must be All-Perfect and Infinite. We also know that there must only be one God.

We learned that we have been created in the best of ways with the best purpose. We have the potential to become the best of creatures, and our purpose is to become as close to Allah (swt) as we can (qurb) by serving Him (ʻibādah).

By making choices in line with what Allah (swt) wants, and having God-conscious intentions, we are setting ourselves up to be successful in this world and the next. In order to fulfill this purpose, we concluded that we need guidelines from Allah (swt) Himself, which we call the religion of Islam.

While there are many ways of life and so-called "religions" that people may follow, there is only one true religion and that religion is Islam. The other so-called religions do not meet the criteria for the true religion.

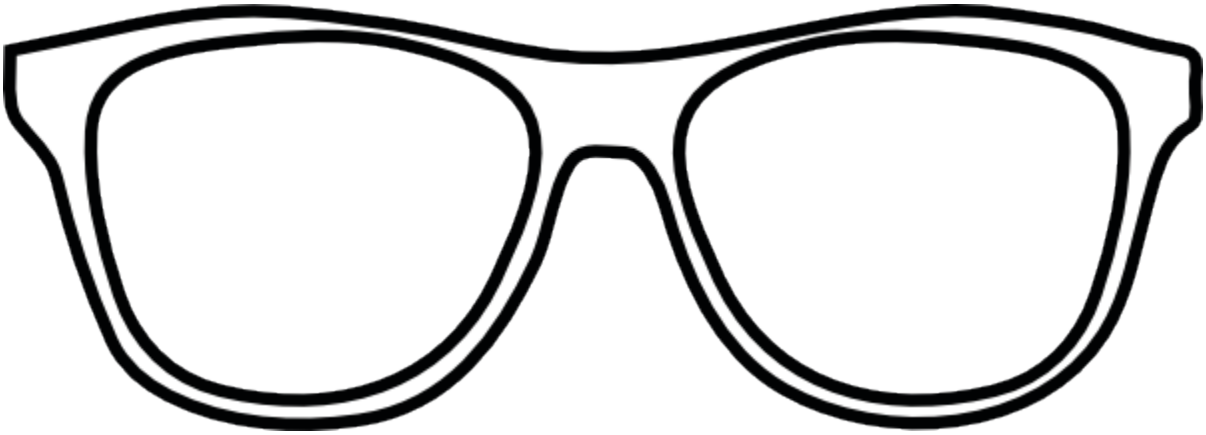
Story connection:
In the story, Ibrahim comes across several different glasses, and he's not sure which pair of glasses he needs to help him get to the other side. Some of the glasses he found did not help him with reaching his goal. Only one pair of glasses did the job.



Worksheet 1.3

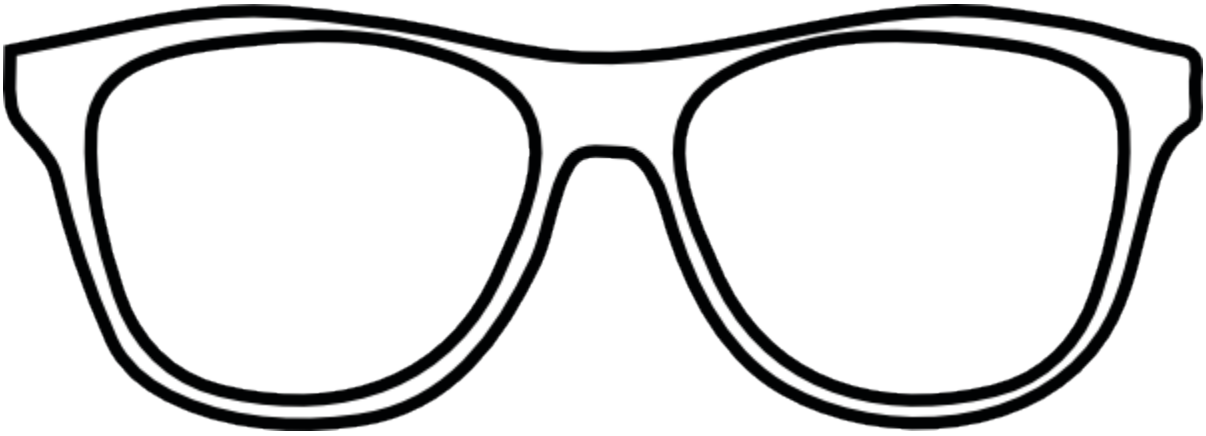
Examine the different pairs of glasses that Ibrahim finds with their different characteristics and decide what religion or way of life they could represent. Color code the glasses according to the story description and add other identifying features.

GLASSES #1



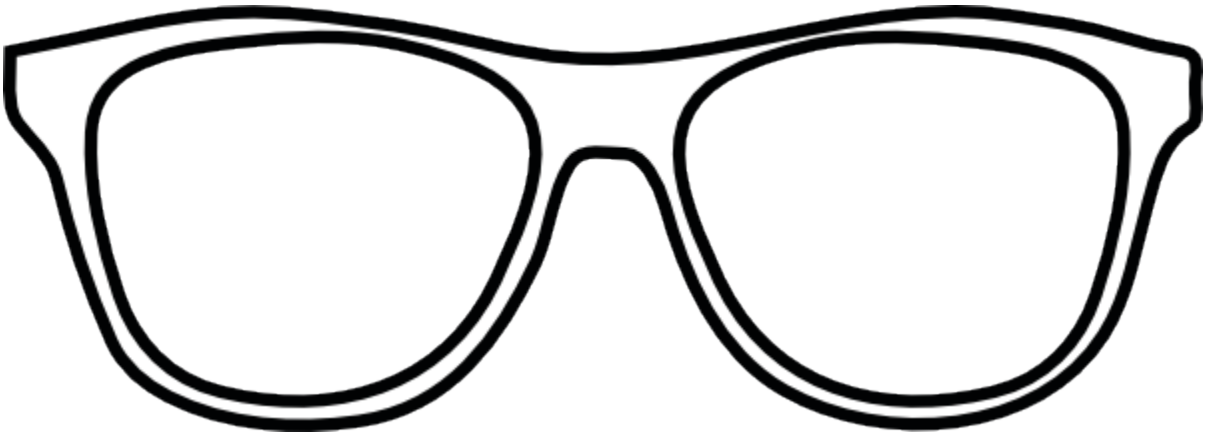
1. A religion or way of life these glasses represent:

GLASSES #2



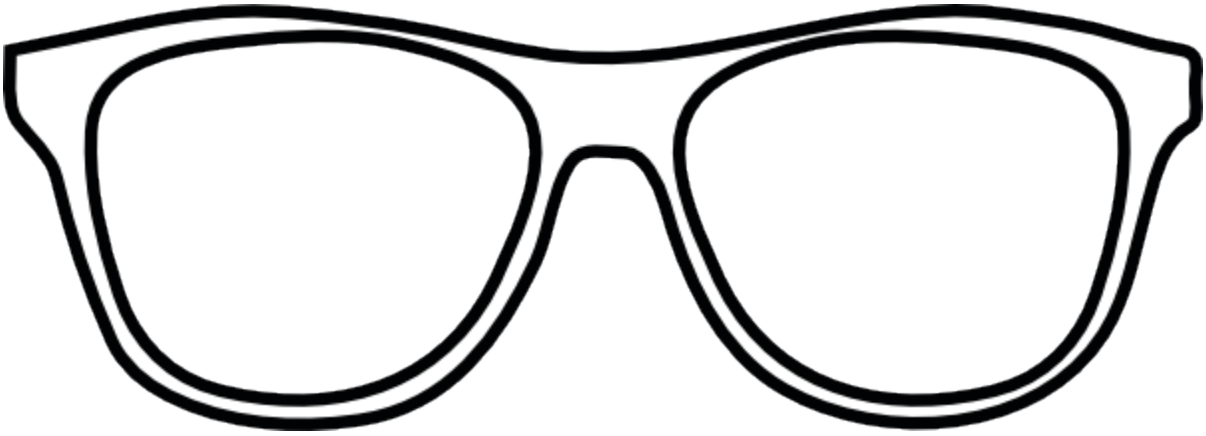
2. A religion or way of life these glasses represent:

GLASSES #3



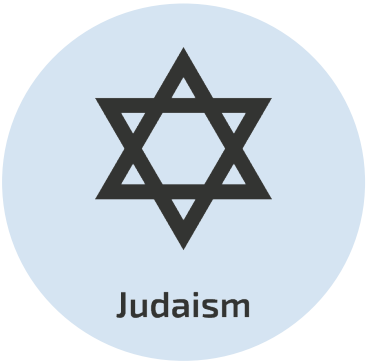
3. A religion or way of life these glasses represent:

GLASSES #4:



4. A religion or way of life these glasses represent:

GAME TIME: In groups of 4+, play a round of broken telephone and see if your group can keep a given message intact for even a brief time. Try increasing the complexity of the message in each round.



Some "religions," for example, believe that there are multiple gods. However, our logic and fiṭrah have both proven that there is one God. Some other religions may believe in one God, but their idea of god limits God and as we have learned, this also goes against logic and fiṭrah. Some of these "religions" do not have Prophets or a divine book, and we have talked about the need for a merciful creator to send guides to his creatures. Other religions may believe in some sort of guides, but these guides are not impeccable role models.

The only religion whose teachings are consistent with logic and fiṭrah is the religion of Islam. In this lesson, we will look at some of the ways in which the religion of Islam is a unique and unmatched set of teachings.

ISLAM IS UNCHANGED AND TIMELESS

Since we believe in an All-Perfect God, we should believe that the religion that He sent down for us to follow is perfect in every way. The directions that He gave us must be unchanged and timeless.

THINK ALOUD INFER: If human beings were responsible for changing or developing religion, for example to "modernize" or "update" it, then did we need that religion in the first place? Explain this paradox.

It is undisputed, even by people that are not Muslim, that the Bible of Christianity and the Torah of Judaism have been changed. The Bible was written many years after Prophet Īsā (ʿa) was raised to Heaven. It might have remnants of what they remembered from the Injīl, the book of Prophet Īsā (ʿa), but it is imperfect. This is why there are so many different versions of the Bible today.

The Torah is also changed from the book of Prophet Mūsā (ʿa), although it might have some remnants of the original Tawrāt in it. These books had been changed before the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). In contrast, the Holy Qur'ān was sent for the people until the end of time.

The Christians and Jews had been told that there would be another Prophet, who would come, and they had learned some of the characteristics of this final Prophet. One of the companions of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), Salmān al-Farsī, had learned about the characteristics of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) from Christian monks.

However, as Muslims we are all unanimous on what the Qurʾān is and what is in the Qurʾān. Even though it was revealed over 1,400 years ago, it is still intact and will always be intact. There is only one version, and that is the original version. Even when archaeologists have found some of the oldest versions of the Qurʾān from close to the Prophet's time, the words and text have always been the same. This is why we see today, there is only one version of the Qurʾān in existence. Any copy of the Qurʾān you pick up anywhere in the world has exactly the same words and letters in the same order. No other book in history has been kept the same for 1400 years.

ISLAM IS THE MOST ADVANCED

We know that Allah (swt) has sent other Prophets, whose followers became the groups that we know as Christians and Jews. If we look carefully at these other religions, we can see that at a very basic level, they are actually quite similar**.** They all teach us to believe in one God and the Day of Judgement, to follow the Prophets, and to have good akhlāq. But, what is it that sets Islam apart?

Story connection:
These religions are like the last few pairs of glasses that Ibrahim found; they all seemed to work to some degree, helping Ibrahim see that athe glass screen was actually a computer touch screen.

THINK ALOUD: What made the last pair of glasses perfect?

Over time, Allah (swt) sent more Prophets, with the same message: tawḥīd. The laws of the religion were revealed more over time, until we reached the laws revealed through Qurʾān and ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

After all of the other Prophets, who told their tribes and followers of the advent of the last Prophet, Allah (swt), in His wisdom, decided to send Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) as the final messenger. He brought the final and most complete religion. These laws were preserved with the Imāms until the end of time. The Imām of our time (ʿaj) knows all the perfected laws of Islam, but when we do not have access to him, we look to our ʿulamāʾ for guidance.

The Prophet (ṣ) has also said, "My example amongst the Prophets is like the example of a house that has been built complete and beautiful, except for one missing brick. Everyone that comes into this house says, "What a beautiful house, except for this one brick that is missing.'" The Prophet (ṣ) continued, "I am like that missing brick — Prophethood comes to an end and completion through me."

There are various proofs for this, including the fact that other Prophets described Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and how he would be the last, and even the miracle of the Qurʾān itself, and what Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) told us about his own prophethood.

Another aspect of Islam being the most advanced religion is that Islam teaches us through impeccable role models. Other religions attribute major sins to their guides or prophets. In contrast, as Muslims we believe in perfect role models like the Prophets and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). They are sinless and noble human beings. This teaching is unique to Islam. The great role models that Islam presents for us set a high and noble standard for us to reach. Islam's role models give us great examples to follow in our everyday life and for any situation that we may face.

Another unique aspect of the religion of Islam is that it encourages its followers to think and use logic, and it does not contradict science. Islam encourages its followers to think, reflect and to use their intellect to reach the truth and at the same time is against blind faith. The teachings of Islam never contradict science. There is a lot of scientific fact that the Holy Qurʾān presents which science often later confirms. For example, the Qurʾān speaks about the Earth shrinking, as well as the universe as a whole expanding. Both these statements have been recently confirmed by science.

THINK ALOUD: Think of an individual that you would consider your role-model. What characteristics do they embody? Do they have any flaws? What is the benefit to having flawless role-models?

ISLAM: A COMPLETE WAY OF LIFE

Islam is the most complete religion in that it is a complete lifestyle, and not just guidelines for some aspects of life. This distinguishes it from other religions because Islam has a perfect system that guides us in our day-to-day lives and is completely holistic. It includes everything from our physical to spiritual health. It has guidelines for every area of our lives, from us as individuals to our family to our society. It also teaches us many things about life after death and what we need to do to prepare for this life. These guidelines serve to establish our worldview.

This benefits us greatly and helps us live a pure life. It has given us guidelines so we are able to perform these actions in the best possible way to reach our purpose.

In one of the last verses to be revealed in the Qurʾān, Allah says that He has perfected our dīn and completed His blessing upon us. Then, He says, "I have approved Islam as your religion."[1] Allah (swt) also makes it clear in the Qurʾān that there is one (true) religion and that is Islam.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الإِسلامُ

Indeed, with Allah religion is Islām.[2]

Story Connection:

Think about the last pair of glasses that Ibrahim found in the story: they showed him the garden's reality, but they also showed him the glass touch-screen. Thus, Ibrahim is better able to work toward his purpose when he wears those glasses.

1 *Noble Qurʾān*, Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

2 *Noble Qurʾān*, Āle ʿImrān, 3:19

Qurʾān Activity

What do the following verses tell us about Islam and its characteristics?

لَّا يَأْتِيهِ ٱلْبَـٰطِلُ مِنۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِۦ ۖ تَنزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

Falsehood cannot approach it (the Qurʾān), at present or in the future, [a revelation gradually] sent down from the All-Wise, Praiseworthy.[3]

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَـٰفِظُونَ

Certainly, We have sent down the Reminder (Qurʾān), and certainly, We will preserve it.[4]

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا ۚ

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.[5]

CONCLUSION

It is clear that we need religion, which is a set of guidelines and instructions for us to reach our purpose. As we know, this purpose is to become closer to Allah (swt) by serving Him, and become as perfect as we can. We need a religion that comes from Allah (swt), because as our Creator, He knows what is best for us. When we look at the various teachings and ways of life available, we can see that Islam is the only true religion and the only way to live because it is from Allah (swt).

3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Fuṣṣilat, 41:42

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Ḥijr, 15:18

5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

CHAPTER 2

Attributes of Allah

2.1a Allah's (swt) Attributes

2.1b Allah's (swt) Attributes II

2.2 Tawḥīd

2.3 Allah's Justice

2.1a Allah's (swt) Attributes

OBJECTIVES:

- Reflect on Allah's (swt) creations as reflective of His divine attributes
- Explore the ways in which Allah's (swt) attributes help us to achieve closeness with Allah (swt)
- Familiarize ourselves with four of Allah's (swt) core attributes: Al-ʿAlīm, Al-Qadīr, Ar-Raḥmān, and Al-Ḥakīm
- Understand that Allah (swt) is Al-ʿAlīm, the all-knowing; Allah (swt) is **Al-Qadīr** (القدير), the All-Powerful

HOOK ACTIVITY: If you had to make a list of characteristics or attributes that define you and/or your identity for someone else, what would you include? Share your list with a partner. Were some of the characteristics that your partner chose for him/herself recognizable to you as well?

Story Recap:

Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He has seen various messages hidden for him throughout the garden, giving him clues as to how to exit the enclosure. In the last lesson, Ibrahim found a pair of glasses that would help him discover more about this mysterious garden.

WHO IS THE CREATOR?

Ibrahim's face was almost as bright as the sun; he was grinning from ear to ear and couldn't believe that he was finally getting closer to the water on the other side. Wearing his beautiful glasses, he was now able to see the glass touch-screen with perfect vision. He had hit "Enter" and was watching the letters on the screen rearrange themselves. After a few seconds, he read the message on the screen. It said, "Do you want to know the Creator better, get to the water, and do what He thinks is best for you?"

Ibrahim smiled. Of course, he wanted to know the Creator of this wonderful world, the one who created him! Of course, he wanted water when he was so thirsty! He immediately hit 'Yes,' excited to see what would happen next. He was expecting some kind of explanation or video to appear, but the following appeared on the screen instead:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِن دَابَّةٍ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ

"Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and whatever creatures He has scattered in them, and He is able to gather them whenever He wishes."[1]

1 *Noble Qur'ān*, Ash-Shūrā, 42:29

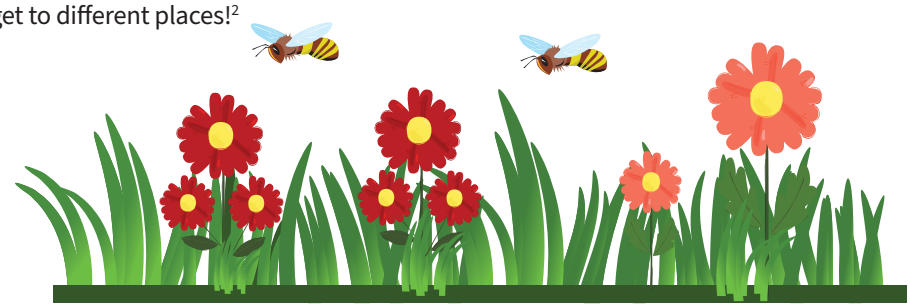
This world has been created in a way that it will tell you about your Creator. Look at everything in this garden and figure out four characteristics of its Creator. Look at the sky, the earth, the plants, the trees, and the animals within the garden. Enter these four characteristics in the following boxes and you will have passed the first stage.

Ibrahim groaned. He wanted to know more about the Creator and get to the water. Then again, it was kind of fun to have a puzzle to figure out. There must be a reason why the Creator had made him and given him instructions to follow. As soon as he was about to walk away from the screen, he saw something else appear on the screen. A picture of a backpack appeared on the screen, and next to it, a "Print" button. He grinned — this awesome computer also had a 3D printer!

A small hole opened in the glass screen and out shot a backpack. "Great!" Ibrahim thought to himself. Opening it up, he found some supplies, including a notepad and pen. "Now I can write down my discoveries and keep track of the attributes of the Creator," he thought. There were a few other supplies in it, including a shovel and an empty water bottle.

Ibrahim sat down on the grass and thought about everything that had happened so far. How did the Creator know that his most urgent question was to figure out what he was supposed to do, to find his purpose? What did He want Ibrahim to do? The Creator must have known what Ibrahim was thinking and also Ibrahim's deepest needs and desires. The Creator had even included a water bottle in the backpack, showing that He knew Ibrahim was thirsty and wanted water. Clearly, the Creator knew everything about him—and about the universe! Ibrahim opened his notebook and wrote down, "*Al-ʿAlīm*: The All-Knowledgeable." All of a sudden, he heard the noise of running water. He looked at the water bottle and his eyes widened. There was water filling the bottle! Spontaneously. It only filled about a quarter of the bottle, but Ibrahim opened it and drank it eagerly. It felt so good. "Alḥamdulillāh," he thought to himself, "Thank You for being a Creator that knows me and my deepest needs!" It looks like he'd figured out at least one characteristic!

He got up and started to walk around. There were so many wonderful things in this garden that Ibrahim didn't know what to focus on. A bee buzzed past his ear, and Ibrahim's gaze followed it as it headed towards a bunch of flowers. He watched the honey bee intently, observing how it jumped from flower to flower, taking the pollen. He had learned about bees in school and how they were a vital part of the ecosystem. They were on the verge of becoming extinct and without them, chaos would ensue for the environment. Even though they were so small, they played such a huge role and had a purpose in the grand scheme of things. Not only that, he had learned that bees could do amazing things despite being so small. They always took the fastest route when traveling between flowers, could compute angles, and are the only animal known to be able to calculate the fastest way to get to different places![2]



AL-ʿALĪM:
The All-Knowledgeable

AL-QADĪR:
The All-Powerful

UṢŪL AD-DĪN:
the core beliefs of Islam

2 http://mentalfloss.com/article/53691/13-fascinating-facts-about-bees

ʿAQL (عقل):
reason

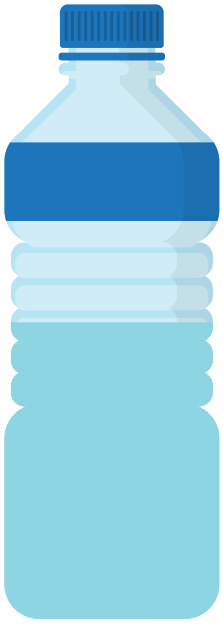
FIṬRAH (فطرة):
innate God-seeking nature

TAWḤĪD (توحيد):
the Oneness of Allah (swt)

"What a skilled and capable Creator!" The Creator was so powerful and could do absolutely anything, making the smallest of creatures so fascinating! Knowing that the Creator knew everything that was happening to him, and also that He was so powerful, gave Ibrahim a sense of comfort. He smiled, opened his notebook, and wrote "Al-Qadīr: The All-Powerful." Ibrahim was no longer scared or worried — he was in good hands. The Creator was watching him and knew what was happening. As he reflected, he wrote down "Al-Khabīr: The All-Aware." The water bottle spontaneously filled again partway, and Ibrahim happily drank the water that appeared. He knew that this water was just a little reflection of the real water in the fountain that was waiting for him on the other side.

In the previous chapter, we learned that we all have a divine purpose in this world. In order to reach this purpose, we need religion to assist, guide, and instruct us. We also concluded that the most perfect religion that will help us reach this purpose is Islam. The foundation of Islam is rooted in the *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn* (**اصول الدين**) — the Roots of Religion. The *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn* are the core beliefs of Islam, and it is important that we believe in these on our own. We cannot believe in them simply because someone tells us to. We must logically arrive at the conclusion that these beliefs are true by using our own intellect. Other things may help us along the way, like the guidance of the Maʿṣūmīn (ʿa), but it is something that we have to conclude for ourselves. Allah (swt) has created us with *ʿaql* (**عقل**), reason, and *fiṭrah* (**فطرة**), innate God-seeking nature, which can help us find and accept the truth.

There are five *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn*, the first of which is **Tawḥīd** (**توحيد**)—the Oneness of Allah (swt). Nothing is worthy of worship, except for Allah (swt), the One, and we submit to Him completely. But knowing that there is one God is simply not enough to understand *Tawḥīd*. We must also try to get closer to Him by following His religion and learning about Him. In this story, Ibrahim is on a journey to find out about the Creator. If someone asked you what you knew about Allah (swt), your Creator, what would you say?



REFLECTION Think about your closest friend. Why are you friends with them? What are their best characteristics? Describe them the best that you can by using a few words.

Now, imagine that you knew nothing about them. Could you be best friends with them if you didn't know anything about them? Of course not! It is only after you get to know someone, learn about their traits, and spend time with them that you can build a real connection with them. When you get to know your friend and see how kind they are to you, you develop a real connection with them and want to become even closer.

In the same way, if we truly see how much Allah (swt) has done for us, and recognize all of the kind things that He has done for us, we will want Him to love us, and we will want to obey and worship Him to get that love and closeness. In the story, we see how Ibrahim is desperate to find the water that he knows he needs. In the story, the water represents getting to know Allah (swt) and becoming closer to Him. Ibrahim has seen how Allah (swt) has been so kind to Him in the story and getting to know Him more is leading Ibrahim even closer to Him.

THINK ALOUD: Is there someone in your life that you feel very close to and also admire, such as your parent (s), a teacher, or a relative? How would you hope that this person feels about you in return? What are some things that you consciously do to please and/or impress this person?

If we learn more about Allah (swt) and His attributes, we can become closer to Him and build this special connection. Obeying Him, and through this, getting closer to Him, is a part of our life's very purpose! In the story, the more Ibrahim discovers about Allah's (swt) characteristics, the more water he gets in his bottle to drink. Knowing Allah (swt) is like sustenance for our souls and helps us live a meaningful life. But how can we get to know Allah (swt) when we can't see or sense Him with our five senses?

THINK ALOUD: Besides Allah, there are several concepts that most people believe in despite not being able to see or sense it with their five senses. Can you think of any examples?

GETTING TO KNOW ALLAH (SWT)

When we described our best friends earlier, what words did we use? We used certain adjectives to describe them, like kind, funny, and intelligent. These descriptive words are called characteristics or **attributes.** An **attribute** is a quality that is a part of someone. If we want to get to know somebody, we can learn about their attributes and characteristics. This will give us a better idea of who they are. Similarly, we can try to get to know Allah (swt) and understand Him better by learning about His attributes.

If we look at the world, Allah (swt) has given us many signs which help us learn about Him. In Arabic, these signs are called **āyāt** (آيات). In the story, Ibrahim is trying to figure out some of Allah's (swt) most basic characteristics by observing the garden and the things that Allah (swt) has created. We can do this, too! If we reflect and think about the things that Allah (swt) has created in the world, we can see that each thing and the way it is made reflects one or more of the attributes of Allah (swt).

The other way that Allah (swt) shows us His Attributes is through the Qurʾān, ḥādīth, and duʿās taught to us by the Prophet (ṣ) and Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Thinking about these qualities can help us get to know Allah (swt), become closer to Him, and worship Him as He deserves to be worshiped!

ATTRIBUTE:
a quality that is a part of someone

ĀYĀT (آيات):
signs Allah gives to help us learn about Him.

Activity 2.1a:

In the table below, come up with a list of a few of Allah's magnificent creations. Then, think about an attribute of Allah's (swt) that this creation reflects.

ALLAH'S (SWT) MAGNIFICENT CREATION	ALLAH'S (SWT) ATTRIBUTE(S) THAT THIS CREATION REFLECTS
Ex. A Fruit Tree	The Provider

ALLAH'S (SWT) CORE ATTRIBUTES

Allah (swt) has 99 famous and perfect names, which are called Al-*Asmā ul-Ḥusnā* (الاسماء الحسنى). However, His description cannot be limited to any number. In Duʿā Al-Jawshan Al-Kabīr, which we usually recite in the nights of Qadr in the month of Ramaḍān, we call upon Allah (swt) by 1,000 of His attributes! Even though there are many ways to describe Allah (swt), He has some core attributes or characteristics. His other attributes are an extension of these core attributes.

We are learning about four of Allah's (swt) core characteristics that are the building blocks in understanding Allah (swt) and His perfection. If we are able to understand these four attributes properly, then we will be able to better understand how He always helps us and has our best interests in mind. These four core attributes that we will go over are Al-ʿAlīm, Al-Qadīr, Ar-Raḥmān, and Al-Ḥakīm.

AL-ʿALĪM

The first core attribute of Allah that we will go over is that He is **al-ʿAlīm** (العليم), which means the All-Knowing or All-Knowledgeable. Allah (swt) has knowledge of everything. In the story, Ibrahim realizes that the Creator — Allah (swt) —knows a lot about him, without Ibrahim ever saying it out loud. There isn't a single thing that Allah (swt) doesn't know. His knowledge is different and is not limited. We have bodies, and we know what we can sense with our five senses. We might know some things, but our knowledge is always limited. How much do you know about the people passing you on the street? By looking at them, we might know what they look like or what their voices sound like, but we can't read their minds or know what will happen to them

in the future. Allah (swt) does not have these limitations. He sees our actions and knows our thoughts. He knows what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future! In the story, the Creator knows exactly what Ibrahim is seeking and gives him exactly what he needs. From this, Ibrahim understands that his Creator is the All-Knowing! When we stand to pray, we should always try to remember that Allah knows exactly what we need and what we are thinking.

Does knowing that Allah (swt) knows everything change how you want to live your life? Imagine if you found out that your teacher knew exactly what you were thinking — all the time! Would you be more careful about the things that you think? Allah (swt) knows what we are thinking all the time, and He is always aware of what we're doing. Whenever we are doing anything, we should try to remember that we are not alone; Allah (swt) is there with us! Even if we're trying to hide what we're thinking, He knows! In the Qur'ān, Allah (swt) says,

> *"Whether you hide what is in your hearts or disclose it, Allah knows it. He knows whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth; and Allah has power over all things."*[3]

AL-QADĪR

After figuring out that Allah (swt) knew everything, Ibrahim figured out how powerful his Creator was by observing the fascinating creatures in the garden, like the honey bee! When we say that Allah (swt) is **Al-Qadīr** (القدير), the All-Powerful, this means that He has unlimited power and ability. Allah's (swt) power extends to everything, and He can do absolutely anything. In the story, Ibrahim realized how powerful Allah (swt) is by looking at the smallest of creations. He knew that the Creator must be powerful if He could create something so complex. Knowing that Allah (swt) is All-Powerful, we also know that He is capable of doing anything that He wants and helping us in any situation.

When a person gets power, sometimes they abuse that power for unjust reasons. However, Allah (swt) is the only one who is All-Powerful and All-Just. All power comes from Him. In combination with His mercy and Wisdom, His power is actually a source of comfort for us. There is nothing that is too difficult for Allah (swt) to do, and if we have Allah (swt) on our side in a troubling situation, who else do we need? Ibrahim realizes how comforting it is to have this type of Creator watching over him; Allah (swt) not only knows that He is stuck, but He also knows how to get Ibrahim out, and is capable of getting him out as well! This thought makes Ibrahim happy.

Like Ibrahim, we know that Allah is All-Knowing and All-Powerful. So, why does it seem like He might not always help us when we need it? Why isn't the Creator immediately helping Ibrahim in the story to escape the glass walls and get the water? What do you think the reason could be?

3 *Noble Qur'ān,* Āle ʿImrān, 3:29

KEY POINTS:

- It is important for us to understand the *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (*the roots and foundations of Islam) with our '*aql.*
- The first of the *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn* is *Tawḥīd,* which means the Oneness of Allah (swt).
- Even though we can never know Allah (swt) completely, we can learn about Him and His characteristics in a limited way by studying His signs and looking at how He has described Himself.
- Allah (swt) has core attributes, four of which are: *Al-'Alīm (*the All-Knowing), *Al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful), *Ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), and *Al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise).

Lesson Questions and Project

What do the following verses and ḥadīth tell you about learning about Allah (swt) and His characteristics?

1. Imām Ja'far Al-Ṣādiq ('a) has said: '*The best of worship is thinking continuously about Allah and His power.*'

2. *With Him are the treasures of the Unseen; no one knows them except Him. He knows whatever there is on land and in the sea. No leaf falls without His knowing it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or withered but it is in a manifest Book.*[4]

3. *Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing.*[5]

Allah's Attributes Part I3

ALLAH'S CORE ATTRIBUTES

1 **Al-'Alīm** All-Knowing العليم

2 **Al-Qadīr** All-Powerful القدير

3 **Ar-Raḥmān** الرحمن Compassionate (to everyone)

4 **Al-Ḥakīm** All-Wise الحكيم

4 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-An'ām, 6:59

5 *Noble Qur'ān,* Ash-Shūrā, 42:12

Oral Narrative Interview Project

As you have learned, Allah (swt) has many attributes. People often can recall stories of times in their life where they witnessed a particular attribute or attributes very clearly. Choose different community or family members to interview and ask them about a time where that attribute of Allah (swt) was shown in their life. You can choose any attribute of Allah (swt) that you have learned in this lesson or that is in Lesson 2 of Qurʾānic Arabic (except Al-ʿAlīm, you cannot choose that!). After you compile their narratives, present their stories in an essay format. Your essay should include an analysis of how the interviewee's experience (s) exemplify this particular attribute. An example for the chart has been provided for you below:

ATTRIBUTE (ARABIC)	MEANING (IN ENGLISH)	NARRATIVE OF COMMUNITY, FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND
Al-ʿAlīm	**Allah is the All- Knowledgeable**	**Name of person interviewed***:* Narjis, my mother **Their Narrative:** *One day, I had a very important interview that I needed to be at. After Fajr prayer, I prepared for the interview, prepared our family's meals, and got in my car to leave. I left an extra 45 minutes early, even after calculating traffic time. I began to do dhikr in the car. Then, my car started to feel funny and "POP!" I had a flat tire. I pulled to the side of the road and had to call someone to help me fix the tire. By this time there was a lot of traffic and I had to take side roads to get to the interview. I was 10 minutes late to the interview that day, but Alhamdulillah I still got the job. That evening, while watching the news, I saw that there was a FATAL car accident a few blocks ahead of where my car had a flat tire. I realized that by giving me a flat tire, Allah (swt) with his infinite knowledge, saved me from being involved in the accident. He is Al-ʿAlīm.*

Create the following template for yourself on a lined piece of paper:

ATTRIBUTE (ARABIC)	MEANING (IN ENGLISH)	NARRATIVE OF COMMUNITY, FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND
		Name of person interviewed*:* **Their Narrative:**

2.1b Allah's (swt) Attributes II

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand that Allah's four core attributes helps us recognize how He is our Rabb, which helps us to get closer to Him, reaching our true purpose in life.
- Explore how Allah (swt) is Ar-Raḥmān, the All-Merciful, and Al-Ḥakīm, the All-Wise.
- Reflect on how, sometimes, Allah (swt) helps us by giving us what we need and not necessarily what we want. This helps us to grow.
- Recognize that one of Allah's qualities is that He nurtures us; He is our Rabb.

Story Recap:

Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He has seen various messages laid out for him, giving him clues for exiting the enclosure. In the last lesson, Ibrahim started looking for clues to learn more about the Creator.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 5

The sun was beginning to set, and even though Ibrahim hadn't gotten to the water on the other side of the glass wall, he felt comforted, and even happy, as he was learning more about His Creator. It was satisfying to understand just a little about his Creator by observing the beautiful garden and all of its wonderful creatures. He was tired, but a good kind of tired, the way he felt after a good game of soccer.

Even after drinking the water that had spontaneously appeared in the water bottle, he wanted the water from the fountain even more than before. He now understood that getting there might take time, but he was ready to be patient, trusting that the Creator knew best. Ibrahim had written two characteristics down in his notebook: Al-ʿAlīm, the All-Knowing, and Al-Qadīr, the All-Powerful, and had two left to explore.

Deep in thought, he sat at the bottom of the tree with the glasses and looked at the majestic world around him. Everything had a perfect balance. He watched the birds fly to their nest in the tree, their wings fluttering at their side. How did they teach themselves to fly? As he wondered this, a few of the birds brought some small twigs to help build the rest of their nest. "Glory be to the Creator!" Ibrahim said. It was incredible how birds could be the architects of such intricate structures using just their beaks. As he stared at the birds, he noticed a little cocoon hanging off of one of the tree branches.

Caterpillars that turned into butterflies were always a bit of a mystery to him. How could they just wrap themselves up, suffocating themselves? How did they know that something better was waiting for them and knowingly put themselves through

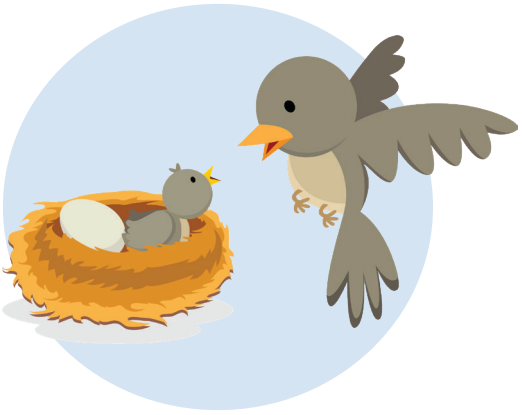
such hardship? Were they sure that there was something better awaiting them? The cocoon began to crack slowly, and Ibrahim was mesmerized, watching it split open more and more.

The curious little creature unfolded its wings and stretched them out, and then flew away in all of its beautiful glory. It was as though the butterfly was hinting to Ibrahim that something wonderful was awaiting him, too. The Creator was so merciful, providing ease to all of the creatures, even when things seemed hopeless. Every animal had its place, a home, and food to eat. Everything that they needed had been provided for them in this beautiful garden. They had to work to get it, but it was all there, as if it had been perfectly set up for them. "Not *as if* it had been set up," Ibrahim thought to himself, "It *was* set up by the Creator, perfectly!" The Creator was not only the All-Knowing, and the All-Powerful, but He was merciful and clearly loved all of His creations.

All of a sudden, Ibrahim noticed a little creature shuffling through the trees. It was bigger than a bird, but smaller than a bear. It was a tree kangaroo! He watched in awe as the tree kangaroo climbed up and down the tree, using its strong claws to grab onto the bark. "Wow," Ibrahim gasped. Not only did every creature have what it needed, but they were perfectly designed to carry out the tasks that they needed to. Tree kangaroos had the perfect type of claws to help them move in the trees and climb up the trees with speed. The Creator must be both wise and merciful.

Ibrahim quickly opened his notebook and wrote down the two characteristics that He had just observed: Ar-Raḥmān — the All-Merciful, and Al-Ḥakīm — the All-Wise. The self-filling water bottle filled halfway, and he gulped down the refreshing drink, excited to see what the next steps would bring him. Knowing all of these things about the Creator was beautiful. Ibrahim felt like he was finally getting to know Him on a deeper level. He was glad that things weren't just shown to him in one of those quick informational videos. Even though this had been difficult, he'd understood the Creator on a deeper level. He would never forget it, and he would hold this in his heart for the rest of his life.

The birds fixing the nest above his head caught his eye again and he saw one of the baby birds fall flat on its face as it tried to fly from the nest. "Oh no!" Ibrahim cried, watching anxiously as the baby bird slowly got back on its feet. Ibrahim watched it try again, this time it fell more gracefully to the ground, almost as though it was flying, but not really. The mother bird watched it try again and again, and Ibrahim smiled as the baby bird's skill grew rapidly. That was real love, he thought to himself. Even though he was sure the mother bird wanted to help her child, she knew that the only way the baby bird would learn was if she guided her, but her baby also had to do it by herself and learn the hard way. "This was kind of like what the Creator did for me," he thought. "The Creator was training me and teaching me in the best of ways. The Creator was Allah (swt), the Rabb. Alḥamdulillāhi rabbil ʿālamīn — All praise is for Allah (swt), the Lord of the worlds!"



In the previous lesson, Ibrahim learned about two of the core characteristics of Allah (swt), including that He is Al-ʿAlīm, the All-Knowing, and Al-Qadīr, the All-Powerful. As he continues his search in today's lesson, he learns two more core attributes.

FOCUS ACTIVITY: Ibrahim is given the opportunity to reflect on some of the marvels of nature that clearly show that a very intelligent and thoughtful Creator is behind their creation. Are there any marvels of nature that you are familiar with? Share a marvel of nature with a partner and describe the features of this creation that are fascinating or complex.

AR-RAḤMĀN

Allah (swt) has chosen to introduce Himself most prominently with characteristics like Ar-Raḥmān and Ar-Raḥīm, which mean that He wants us to remember that He is *Compassionate to everyone*.

Every Sūrah, except Sūrah at-Tawbah, begins with "Bismillahir Raḥmānir Raḥīm," and in this small phrase, Allah (swt) mentions His mercy twice.

In fact, in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, which we recite at least 10 times a day (twice in each prayer), Allah's (swt) kindness is mentioned four times!

In the Qurʾān, Ar-Raḥmān has been mentioned 122 times and Ar-Raḥīm 226 times. These are the two characteristics mentioned the most in the Qurʾān, which show how this is one of the most important attributes of Allah (swt) that can help us to understand Him.

Sometimes, when things are not going the way we'd hoped, we think that Allah (swt) doesn't love us or that He doesn't want to help us. In the story, Ibrahim is getting tired and thirsty as he traverses the garden. He knows that Allah (swt) could help him and solve everything at any moment, but He doesn't do that. At the end of this part of the story, Ibrahim realizes that Allah (swt) was actually helping Ibrahim understand Him better by letting Ibrahim figure things out slowly instead of getting fast answers. This is true love. The Qurʾān and Aḥadīth mention that Allah (swt) truly loves us, which is why He created us and wants us to be successful.

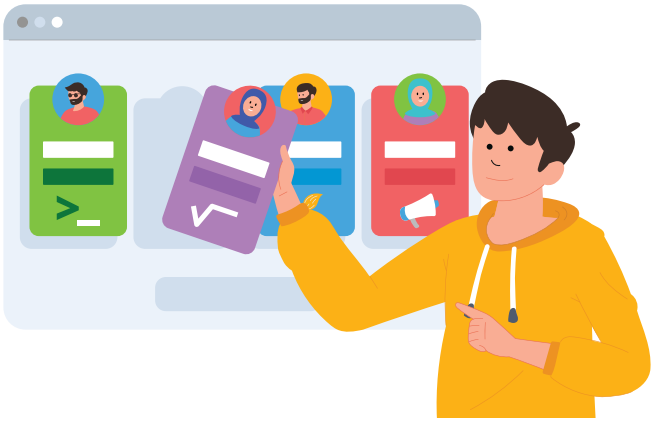
In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says "My Mercy encompasses everything."[1] This means that there is not a single creature that does not receive Allah's mercy.

FOCUS ACTIVITY: In the following scenario, which teacher is the truly kind and loving one? What helps you make your decision?

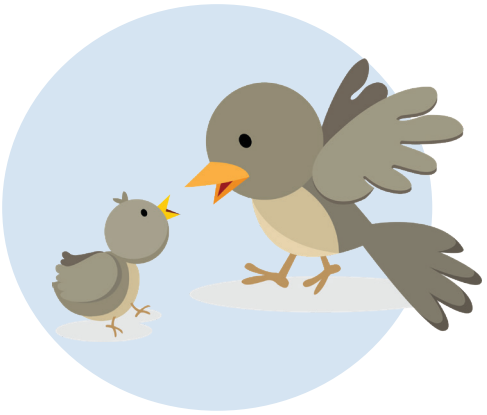
Sarah had put a lot of time and effort into writing her English essay. Unfortunately, when she gets her assignment back, she sees that her teacher has marked up her essay with so many red marks and comments that the whole paper seems to be covered in neat scribbles. Her heart sinks. She's going to be up all night making all of these changes that her teacher is suggesting. In another school, with another English teacher, Ali submits his essay, an assignment he'd quickly completed the night before, and is extremely pleased to see that his teacher has returned it to him with a neatly written A at the top in red ink. He sticks the assignment in his backpack to throw into the recycling bin at home.

Discuss your decision with a partner.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aʿrāf, 7:156



In the story, Ibrahim observes the little bird family and how the mother bird showed some tough (though not too tough) love in order to teach the baby bird how to fly. This is also true of our own mothers. Imagine if your younger brother or sister tried to touch the hot stove or oven. What would your mother do? She would pull him or her away immediately. When she does this, how does the baby react? They likely start crying and screaming, and might even get angry at their mother for not letting them do what they wanted. However, because we've grown up a little, we know that the mother is only doing what's best for her child, even if they may not like it at that very moment. Sometimes, we act like this with Allah (swt). Allah (swt) wants us to avoid something that is bad for us, but we become upset and angry with Him. Eventually, we will realize and see how everything that Allah (swt) has done is actually for our own good. At the end of his discoveries, Ibrahim realizes why the hardship that he went through was actually helpful for him.



THINK, PAIR, SHARE:

Think... of a time when your mom and dad didn't allow you to do something you wanted. You were initially upset, but later realized that they only did this for your own good, and it helped you gain strength (i.e., it strengthened your spiritual muscles)

Pair... up with a partner

Share... your experience

"When Allah (swt) loves a servant, He tests them with difficulties."

Just like your parents love you and want to see you achieve your goals, Allah (swt) loves you, too. In fact, He loves you more than your parents ever could. When Allah (swt) truly loves you, He sends you tests and opportunities to help you reach your ultimate purpose. The Prophet (ṣ) has said, "When Allah loves a servant, He tests them with difficulties." What this means is that Allah (swt) gives us difficulties and a chance to build spiritual muscles, like ṣabr, and all of these muscles help us reach our ultimate purpose, which is becoming closer to Allah (swt)

AL-ḤAKĪM

The final core characteristic of Allah (swt) is that He is Al-Ḥakīm, the All-Wise. In the story, Ibrahim figures out that Allah (swt) must be the All-Wise when he sees the intricate details that Allah (swt) has created in various creations, helping them to live their lives effectively. When we look at something for the first time, we may not understand the wisdom behind certain things in this world. When Ibrahim first looked at the tree kangaroo, he probably didn't think about how the tree kangaroo was created with claws that were perfect to help it climb up the tree. However, after observing it and watching it, he realizes how precise and wise Allah (swt) is to have created it so carefully. When we think about how Allah's knowledge is perfect and encompasses everything, and moreover, that He only wants what is best for us, the natural conclusion is that He is the All-Wise. He takes every factor into consideration

and knows every possibility and its pros and cons, and He always chooses the best way, keeping in mind the whole picture.

In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says that it is He who has shaped us in our mother's wombs in the way that He wanted. He then says, "there is no god except Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise."[2] Everything that Allah (swt), the All-Wise, has told us to do is in order for us to be successful in this world and the Hereafter. He created us, knows us, and loves us!

ALLAH (SWT) AND ME

When Ibrahim learned about Allah's attributes as he searched for them in the glass garden, he understood and was content with the challenges that he was facing because he knew that they were for his own good. How did learning something very basic about these attributes help him piece this together? Let's retrace his steps so that we, too, can understand Allah (swt) better by looking at His characteristics. First, Ibrahim learned that Allah (swt) is Al-ʿAlīm, the All-Knowledgeable. Allah (swt) knows how we can get closest to Him and become perfect more than anyone or anything else.

He knows what will lead to our success in this world and the Hereafter. He also knows the best path that can get us there. Allah (swt) is also Al-Qadīr, the All-Powerful, and as such, Allah (swt) has the ability to guide us to this path, and He is the most capable. He is also Ar-Raḥmān, the All-Merciful; He loves us, is kind to all of His creations, and wants to help us get there. Finally, He is Al-Ḥakīm, the All-Wise, so whatever He does for us and to us is in our best interest and helps us get closer to Him. Once Ibrahim learns something about these attributes, he realizes how Allah (swt) has been trying to help him understand Him all along. The journey that he took with all of its challenges was a way to help him grow and to train him, not hurt him! When Ibrahim realizes this, he says "Alḥamdulillāhi rabbil ʿālamīn."

Everyday, ten times a day, we also say this. What does this phrase from Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah mean? It means "All praise is for Allah, the Lord (Nurturer) of the worlds." The word Rabb means a Lord who is nurturing. These four characteristics of Allah (swt) clearly show us that He is indeed our Rabb, the one who is in charge of everything, takes care of us, and nurtures us to grow in the best way possible. When we think about these characteristics, it can change our relationship with Him. In the story, the way Ibrahim looks at Allah (swt) is completely transformed when he understands these attributes.

"All praise is for Allah, the Lord (Nurturer) of the worlds."

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Āle ʿImrān, 3:6

Worksheet 2.1b: Allah (swt) the Nurturer

As we grow and develop, we realize that our needs grow and develop with us. If you were to explore each stage of your life from infancy to old age, what do you think your needs would be from stage to stage? Identify the needs for each stage of life and then brainstorm some ways that you know of that Allah (swt) nurtures our growth during each stage.

STAGE OF LIFE	WAYS IN WHICH ALLAH (SWT) NURTURES OUR GROWTH
Infancy & Childhood	
Adolescence	
Adulthood	
Old Age	

2.2 Tawḥīd

OBJECTIVES:

- Discuss Allah (swt) as the First Cause behind all things
- Outline and examine the Proof of Design and some examples
- Consider Allah's role as a Nurturer and what it means for intelligent design
- Understand that unity and order are evidence of the Oneness of Allah (swt)

HOOK ACTIVITY:

Have you ever tried to do your homework while having a conversation with your friend or while watching television? What is the usual outcome? What are some better strategies for achieving a successful study outcome?

Story Recap:

We have followed the story of Ibrahim and how he has come to know about the existence of a Wise and Merciful Creator by reflecting on himself and the garden in which he finds himself. We will continue with the story of Ibrahim in a future lesson. In this lesson, we want to go on a similar journey to that of Ibrahim! Let's reflect on ourselves and the world around us in order to gain a greater appreciation of Allah (swt) and his signs.

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ALLAH (SWT)

In 6th grade, we talked about the fiṭrah, and how every human being has intrinsic knowledge of Allah (swt). Although we naturally want to know Allah (swt), we do not need to *prove* that Allah (swt) exists; we just need to *remind* ourselves of His existence. There are two opposing forces that are always tugging on a person's heart. On the one hand, our desires distract us with things other than Allah (swt), and on the other, there is our fiṭrah (an innate God-conscious nature). Worldly distractions and sins are two sides of the same coin that work together in hiding our fiṭrah and thus taking us away from Allah (swt). This is why so many people come to disbelieve in Allah (swt).

Why do we need to remind ourselves of Allah (swt) through logical proof? This helps us awaken our fiṭrah from the slumber it may have fallen into and helps us reconnect with Allah (swt). Logical proofs also help us when we are discussing Allah (swt) and His existence with non-believers.

There are different ways of proving the existence of Allah (swt). In this lesson, we are going to discuss Allah (swt) as the First Cause, as well as the Proof of Design. These two proofs are very much aligned with our fiṭrah, because we naturally see that the world needs an intelligent and wise creator.

It is important to remember that this proof is not the only way for us to know Allah (swt). If we sin and do not do what is wājib, our hearts will become clouded and these simple proofs, which are aligned with our fiṭrah, may not be too meaningful for us. If, on the other hand, we do what is wājib and stay away from what is ḥarām, these proofs can have a greater impact on our life.

ALLAH (SWT): THE "FIRST CAUSE"

Whenever we see or experience something, we naturally ask 'why?' or 'what is the reason?'. When we see something interesting happening in nature, such as a bird

making a nest or an ant touching another ant as it walks past, we are naturally curious about 'why?'. Imagine you are reading a very exciting and interesting book. If someone told you that the book just came about randomly and that the letters and words all put themselves into the right order on their own, you would not believe this at all. You would automatically ask about the author of the book, which is another way of asking about the origins or cause of the book.

The reason we ask this question of 'why?' is because we all know, within ourselves, that all the things we experience with our senses must have a cause. We likewise understand that a *thing* can't come from nothing — meaning someone must have created or made it.

Our mind naturally seeks out causes for all things. Now, when we look at the world around us, we also ask ourselves: 'what is the cause for this world?' and 'who made it?'. Just like that book could not have just come out of nowhere and could not have made itself, this world also could not have just come out of nowhere and could not have just made itself. Therefore, it must have a Creator who created it. This Creator is Allah (swt).

Activity 2.2a:

Come up with 5 why questions that you have about the world around you. Do your questions have a definitive answer or is the cause still being investigated by scientists?

MY *WHY* QUESTIONS	DEFINITIVE ANSWER (DA) / UNDER INVESTIGATION (UI)
Ex. Why do animals not use words to communicate? Do they have their own languages?	DA
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

THE PROPHET (ṢAW) AND THE MAN FROM THE DESERT

One day, the Prophet (ṣ) met a man who lived all his life in the desert. This man began talking to the Prophet (ṣ) about Allah (swt) and saying that he believed strongly in Allah (swt). The Prophet (ṣ) asked him why he believed in Allah (swt). The man said: "When I see the footprints of a camel in the sand, I know that a camel made these footprints, and when I see the footprints of a horse in the sand, I know that a horse made these footprints." Such a simple man, who had never studied or read anything, innately knew that everything must have a cause and that all the creatures in this world were like footprints or fingerprints that point to a Creator.

MEMORIZATION ACTIVITY

Memorize the following āyah from the Qur'ān by next week:

أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"Is there doubt about Allah (swt), the Maker of the heavens and the earth?"[1]

1 *Noble Qur'ān,* Ibrāhīm, 14:10

ALLAH (SWT): THE INTELLIGENT DESIGNER

When we look at the world around us, we not only see that it exists, but also that it runs according to a perfect system, where everything has its special place and runs smoothly. The fact that the world is created in such a perfect way tells us that there must be a very intelligent designer who made it. Again, none of us would believe that a machine that works perfectly randomly made itself. Someone intelligent and wise must have designed it. Similarly, a designer who is wise and all-knowing must have created this world, because it runs so perfectly. This wise designer is Allah (swt).

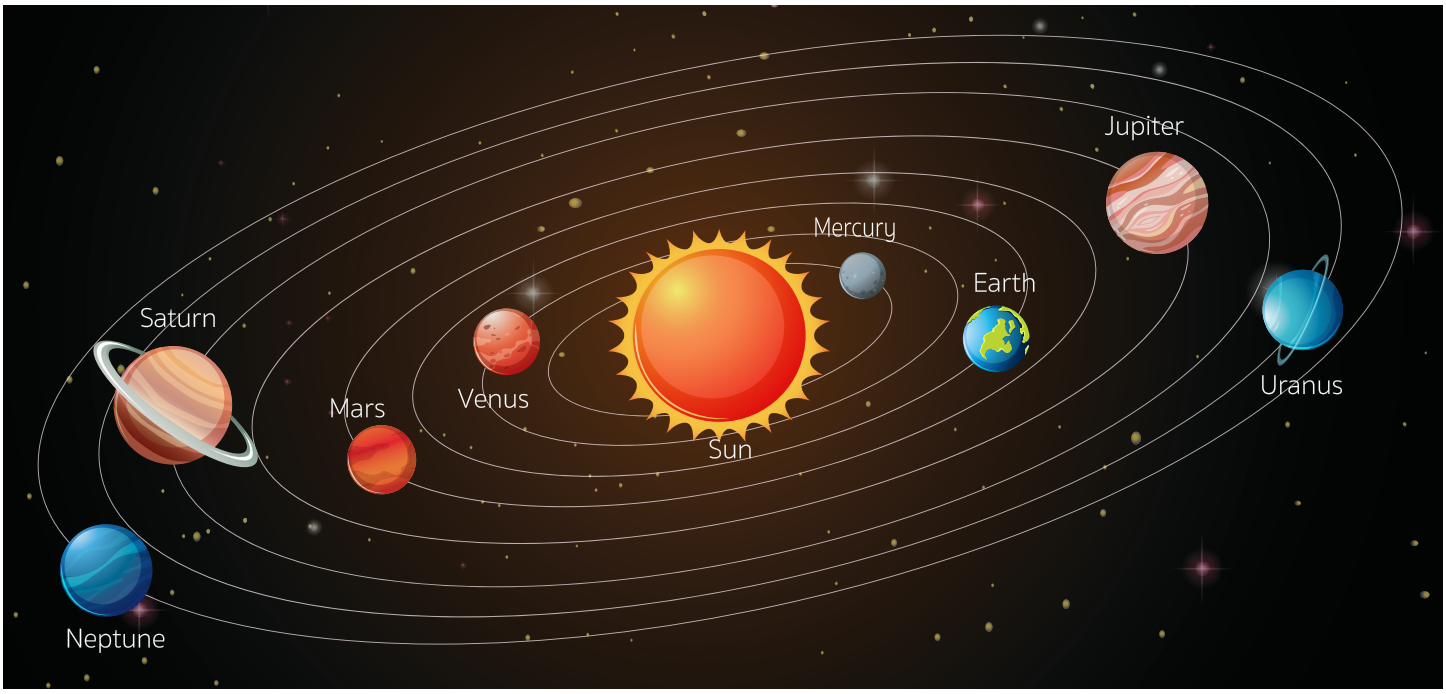
EXAMPLES OF ORDER AND DESIGN IN THE WORLD

THE SHAPE OF RAINWATER

The properties of something so simple as rainwater are perfect for the development of the earth. If they were a little different, the entire structure of the earth would change. Different liquids have different degrees of viscosity (how easily liquid flows, e.g. honey is more viscous than water). However, the viscosity of water is perfect for the use of all creatures. If it was a little more viscous than it is, plants could not have used it for transporting the nutrients vitally important for survival and they would all die out. If the viscosity of water were lower than it is, trivers would flow very differently and consequently, mountain formations would have changed, valleys and plateaus would not have formed, and rocks could not have disintegrated to form soil.[2]

So how is it that rainwater has exactly the right properties? There must be a wise creator and designer who made and designed all of these things the way they are.

2 www.harunyaha.com



THE EARTH'S ORBIT AROUND THE SUN

Another example of design in the universe is the distance of the planet Earth from the sun, and the special orbit the Earth makes around the sun.

The Earth moves around the sun at 29.8 kms (66.6607 miles) per second in an orbit with a very specific path. Had it not been for this fast orbit, the Earth would have moved towards the sun and crashed into it.

A shift in Earth's orbit closer or or further from the sun would primarily affect the planet's temperature. The closer you are to the sun, the hotter the climate. Even a small move closer to the sun could have a huge impact. That's because warming would cause glaciers to melt, raising sea levels and flooding most of the planet. Without land to absorb some of the sun's heat, temperatures on Earth would continue to rise. Temperatures would also see a boost from rising levels of the carbon dioxide and vapours that the oceans released into the air.

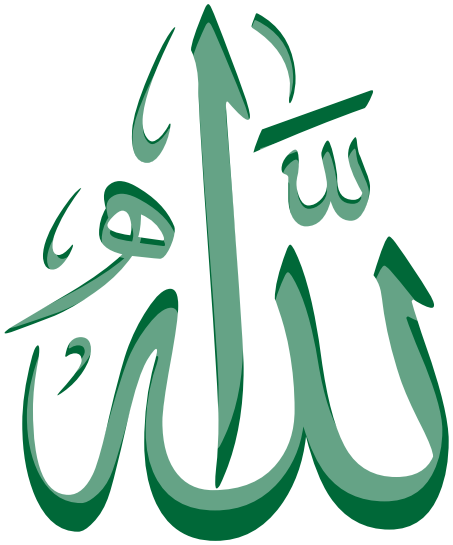
Conversely, a shift in the orbit moving Earth farther from the sun would cool and potentially freeze the planet. Oceans would be covered in ice, causing them to release less carbon dioxide and vapor. It would also make years longer; the farther the planet is from the sun, the longer it takes to complete its annual orbit.

That's not to mention the effect that a shift in Earth's orbit would have on the rest of the solar system. Even a minor change in its path around the sun could cause planets to collide. It also could throw off Earth's delicate positioning with Jupiter. The largest of the eight planets acts as a shield of sorts, deflecting harmful gases and asteroids that might otherwise be bound for Earth.[3]

So we can see that even a small change in the distance of the Earth from the sun, or a tiny change in the path that the Earth takes around the sun, would lead to the end of life and, perhaps, the universe. The fact that the Earth is exactly the right distance away from the sun to allow for life points to the existence of an intelligent designer, whom we call God.

THINK ALOUD: Can you think of any other intricate systems that rely on minute details to function properly? Describe what might happen if one piece of this intricate machinery were to fail.

3 https://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/what-if/what-if-earth-changed-its-orbit.htm



ALLAH (SWT), THE NAME OF BEAUTY AND MAJESTY

As Muslims, we use the word "Allah" to refer to God. This is His most inclusive name, as it is encompassing of all His attributes of beauty and majesty. But what exactly does this word mean? Why did God choose this word for us to use when referring to Him? One of the literal meanings of Allah (swt) is 'the One who is worshipped'[4]. Therefore, we understand from this that Allah (swt) expects from us to worship Him, in all times and situations.

ALLAH (SWT): THE NURTURER (RABB)

THINK ALOUD: If you had to describe the process for caring for a house plant from seed to full growth to a friend, what steps would you outline for them? When would your friend's responsibilities toward their house plant end?

Allah (swt) is the Cause of all things. He created and designed this world. Now, we want to prove that there is only one Creator and Designer for this world and that this is Allah (swt). In addition to this we will also discuss the fact that Allah (swt) is our Nurturer, meaning that not only did He create this world, but He also looks after all of its affairs.

One of the names of Allah (swt) is the **Nurturer (الرب).** A Nurturer not only creates something, but looks after all of its affairs. Allah (swt) did not just create us then leave us on our own. He created us and continues to look after us in every way.

Some people (such as the idol-worshippers who lived at the time of the Prophet (ṣ), believed that Allah (swt) created this world, but that He left other beings to look after its affairs. They worshipped idols, the sun, 'nature', or certain human beings. Some religions, which still exist today, have a similar belief. Let us look at why this belief is not true and does not make sense.

Allah (swt) created this world and so knows all of its details. He is All-Knowing about this universe because it was He who created and fashioned it. He is also All-Powerful in the universe and can do anything He wills within it because it is His creation.

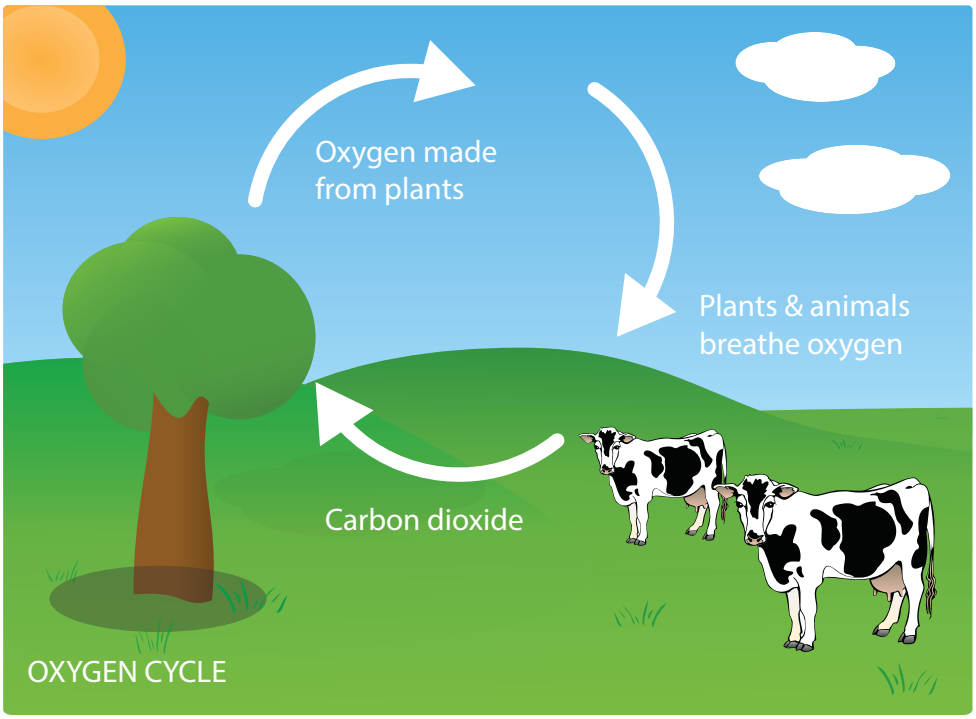
All other beings which people might take as 'gods' (such as idols or 'nature' or a certain human) are creatures within this world. This means that if they have any knowledge at all, this knowledge would be very limited, and if they have any power at all, this power is very limited.

4 *Tafsīr al-Mīzān,* Commentary on Sūrah Al-Fātihah

Let us look at the example of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) and his uncle. Prophet Ibrāhīm's uncle was an idol-worshipper, and Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) was trying to teach him about Islam. One of the first things he said to him was, "My uncle, why do you worship that which cannot see or hear or help you in any way?"

The other important point is that the world we live in is full of connections and systems. It was created in such a way that each part depends on the other.

For example, something as simple as the oxygen we need to breathe and survive depends on a system that includes the sea, the heat from the sun, the mountains, the rivers, the trees and even the soil on the ground. If it is Allah (swt) who created this world with these connections and systems, then automatically it is He who is looking after its day to day needs, because He created these connections. It does not make sense for certain creatures to look after certain parts of the world independently, because all of the parts are connected.



So when we breathe, it is Allah (swt) who provides the air. When we drink, it is Allah (swt) who gives us water, and so on. Allah (swt) looks after all our needs, simple or complex, small or great.

So when we breathe, it is Allah (swt) who provides the air. When we drink, it is Allah (swt) who gives us water, and so on. Allah (swt) looks after all our needs, simple or complex, small or great.

ALLAH (SWT) IS ONE – THE UNITY OF GOD

Now that we know that the Creator and Nurturer is Allah (swt), the next question is, how do we know whether there is only the One God who created this world and looks after it, or whether there are many gods?

If there were more than one god in this world, then there would be chaos everywhere because there would be two designers with different ideas and different ways of making things. This would result in things not running perfectly in the world. For example, imagine if the air that people breathe on one side of the world is different from the air that people breathe on the other side of the world because each god decided to design a different type of air; how would we all be able to live and travel on this planet? This is why Allah (swt) says in the Qur'ān that if there were more than one Lord, the world would break down and be destroyed.[5]

OUR WORLD HAS ONE ORDER

When we come to look at this amazing and perfectly designed universe that we live in we see that everything is designed and built in a uniform manner. The force of gravity is present in all parts of the planet: the air we breathe has exactly the right concentration of gases that our lungs need to inhale and this is the same around the world. There are many other examples of this.

We also see that all the objects in this world are made of tiny little atoms that contain the same basic components (neutrons, protons and electrons). Look at something as big as the sun and something as small as an ant; all these things are made out of the same basic ingredient: atoms. The Creator who made all these things, and the Nurturer who looks after them is One and has no partner or equal.

Besides what we have mentioned so far, the most important reason why there can only be One Creator and Nurturer is that, if God created this material universe that we live in, then He must be greater than this universe and not limited by it in any way. This means that He is not bound by time, space, or shape, and perfect beyond what we can comprehend.

THE SIGNS OF ALLAH (SWT) IN HIS CREATION

The world around us is full of the amazing creations of God. Each of these creations, designed so perfectly and beautifully, is a sign to us of the presence of an Intelligent, Wise Creator, whom we call Allah (swt).

5 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Anbiyā', 21:22

Homework Activity 2.2b: The Signs of Allah (swt)

Choose a window in your learning space to look out from. Can you see any unique features of Allah's creation(s)? What about any systems or natural organizations? For example, a spider's web. Illustrate anything you see that demonstrates the complexity and order of Allah's (swt) creation(s).

In 3-4 sentences explain the complexity of Allah's (swt) design in your selection or the way in which order plays a key role in the structure or function of your selection.

Video Activity 2.2c

The following videos show us examples of the amazing abilities that certain types of animals have. It is very beneficial to reflect on these incredible things in nature that remind us of just how precise God is in His creation, as well as how much He cares for each of His creatures.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk7McNUjWgw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4pxLHG0Wzs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1PID91sEW8

Video Questions

1. In the first video, what special ability do the fish have?

2. Why do you think God has given these fish this particular ability?

3. In the second video, what special ability do the fish have?

4. Why do you think God has given these fish this particular ability?

5. In the third video, what special ability does the puffer fish have? Why did God give this ability to the puffer fish?

6. What does the great variety in the types of creatures who live in the sea/ocean tell us about the Creator of the universe?

7. What do these special abilities that certain animals have tell us about the Creator of the universe?

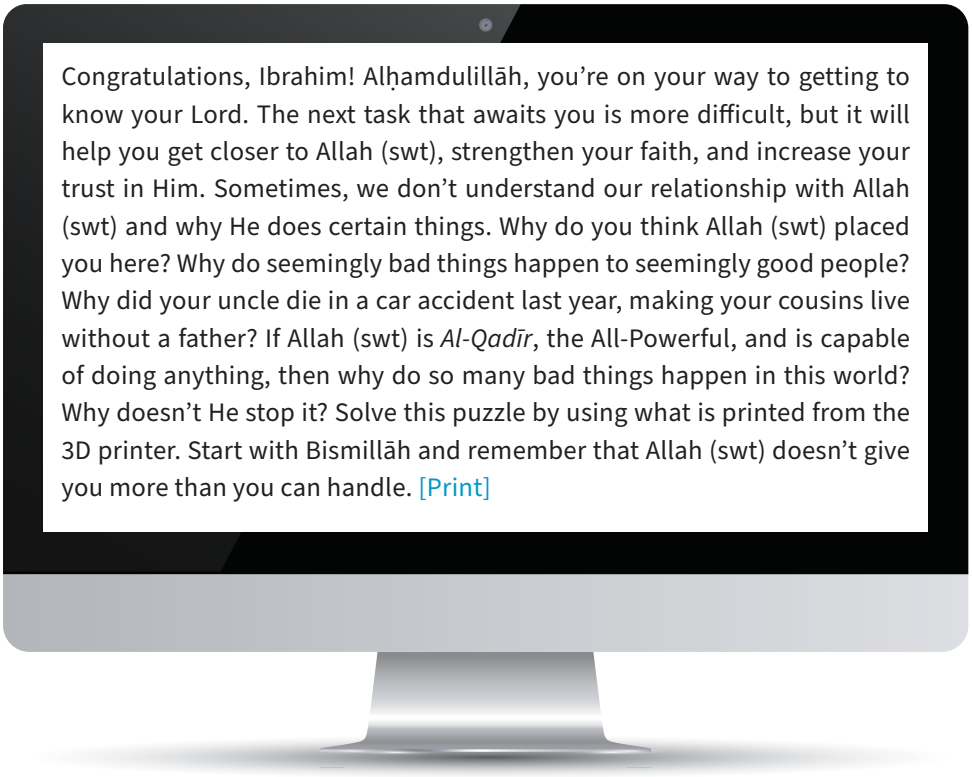
2.3 Allah's (swt) Justice

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the complexity of Allah's (swt) plan for this world and the hereafter
- Examine how Allah's justice would impact the interpretation of worldly tragedies
- Apply the analogy of puzzles to mankind's limitations in understanding Allah's (swt) wisdom
- Understand the reasons that Allah (swt) may allow seemingly bad things to happen
- Compare and contrast multiple approaches or perspectives to issues affecting human beings

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 6: SOLVING THE PUZZLE

Ibrahim's newfound knowledge of Allah (swt) had brought a serenity to his heart. He knew that Allah (swt) was his Rabb and was caring for him and training him in the best way possible, beyond what Ibrahim could imagine. After drinking the water that had appeared in the bottle, his thirst was momentarily satisfied. However, he knew that his thirst would not be truly quenched until he reached the fountain on the other side of the glass wall. He walked back to the glass computer screen, entering the four attributes that he had figured out, and pressed "Enter," waiting to see what would happen. A new message appeared on the screen:


Congratulations, Ibrahim! Alḥamdulillāh, you're on your way to getting to know your Lord. The next task that awaits you is more difficult, but it will help you get closer to Allah (swt), strengthen your faith, and increase your trust in Him. Sometimes, we don't understand our relationship with Allah (swt) and why He does certain things. Why do you think Allah (swt) placed you here? Why do seemingly bad things happen to seemingly good people? Why did your uncle die in a car accident last year, making your cousins live without a father? If Allah (swt) is *Al-Qadīr*, the All-Powerful, and is capable of doing anything, then why do so many bad things happen in this world? Why doesn't He stop it? Solve this puzzle by using what is printed from the 3D printer. Start with Bismillāh and remember that Allah (swt) doesn't give you more than you can handle. [Print]

Ibrahim paused and read the message again slowly. This was a really difficult question to answer. Last year, when his uncle had died in a car accident, Ibrahim was so confused. For a short time, his cousins were really angry with Allah (swt), and Ibrahim hadn't known what to tell them. Their uncle had been killed by a drunk driver. But what had they done to deserve losing their father? Ibrahim wanted to find out the answers to these questions, so he quickly pressed print and eagerly grabbed the contents from the printer. The printer kept printing and printing until it had printed almost 100 items. How was he supposed to keep track of this many things? The items that had been printed were all odd shapes. Some of them had hooks, others had holes, and they were all different colors. Some of them faded into other colors, and others were black; some had pictures on them, and others were blank.

Ibrahim didn't know what these pieces were, he had never seen anything like them before. Some of them had words written on them, like "death," "handicapped," "storm," "justice," "realization," "guidance," and more.

He sat on the floor and looked at each piece carefully. Suddenly, he noticed that two of the pieces were connected to each other; they fit each other perfectly, the hook going into a hole in the other. Ibrahim smiled — it was a puzzle, a real puzzle! The other pieces had to fit together somehow, too, but how could he put the pieces together when he had no idea what the end result was going to be? It wasn't even the type of puzzle that was an image where he might be able to figure it out. It was a 3D puzzle. Ibrahim had done puzzles before, and you had to have the picture on the box to refer to or you might as well give up.

"But what does this have to do with bad things happening in the world?" Ibrahim was a little confused. Sweat started to appear on his face and he sat down, determined to figure out the weird puzzle. He tried every piece of the puzzle with the other 99 pieces and tried to fit them together in every way possible. There were so many things to take into consideration to get them to fit, and so many possibilities. He was getting dizzy from the sheer amount of possibilities. He sat down and tried them, one by one.

Three hours later, Ibrahim had managed to fit three pieces together. "There's no way I can do this when I don't have all the knowledge available to me. How am I supposed to understand a complicated puzzle when I don't know everything and I don't even know what the whole picture looks like?"

A light bulb suddenly went off in Ibrahim's mind as he realized that the key to understanding this was the key to solving the puzzle! Only the puzzle-maker could know what the puzzle looks like.

Allah (swt) knew everything and could take everything into consideration. This world and the Hereafter were like a puzzle; all the pieces fit together in a certain way, but as humans, we don't always know the whole picture and can't understand everything! The pieces did fit together, but it was only Allah (swt) that really knew how. Bad things didn't happen because God was unjust, but precisely because He is just! He knew the whole picture and made everything fit together perfectly. The puzzle made sense when all of the pieces were put together, but looking at individual pieces would give an odd picture and would make no sense to someone observing it from the outside.

He looked up at the computer screen and the blank spot now waiting for his answer. He typed in "I don't know what the puzzle looks like; I can't figure this out." He gulped and hit enter.

Fireworks appeared on the screen and then the following verse:

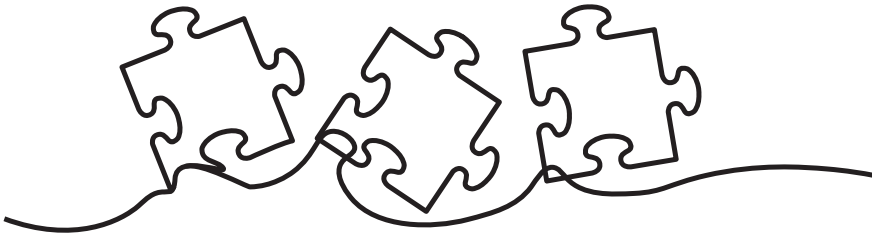
وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ {6} يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ {7}

"...most people do not know. They know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter"[1]

You're right, Ibrahim. In this analogy, Allah (swt) is the one who made the puzzle. He is the only one who understands the entire world and can see it from all angles, taking every possibility into consideration. The puzzle is a beautiful, flawless picture that only He knows. He can see both the world that we live in and the Hereafter. Our perspective as humans is very limited. Do you want to see what the puzzle looks like? You'll only find out on the other side of this glass wall.

In the previous lesson, we learned about Allah's (swt) attributes and that He is our Rabb, the one who is in charge of everything, and who nurtures us and gives us opportunities to grow. Ibrahim figured out that he was going through the difficulties because that was what would help him grow and understand Allah (swt) at a deeper level. In this lesson's part of the story, Ibrahim is faced with some more difficult questions: Why do bad things happen?

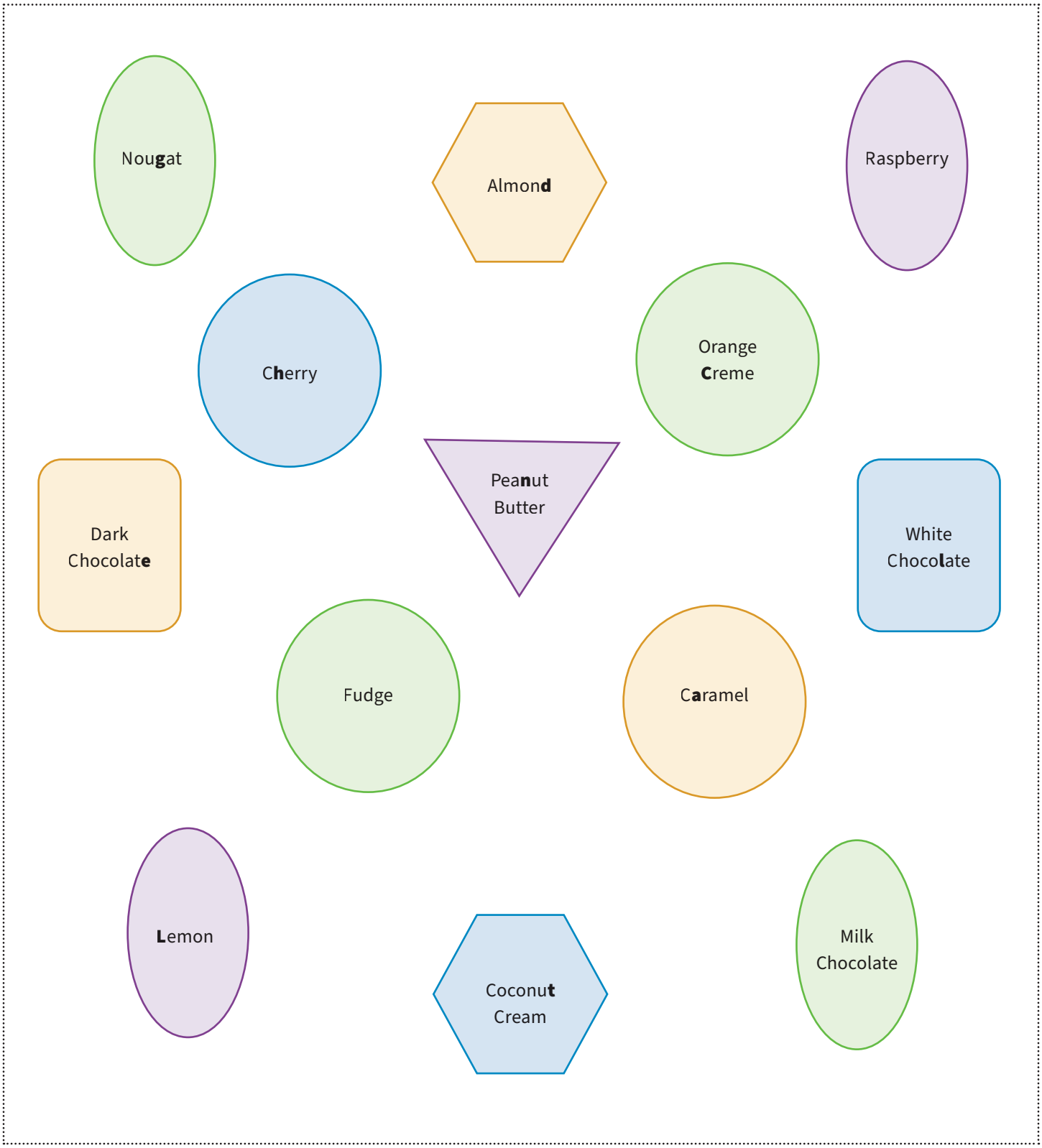
Sometimes, tragic things happen in life and it's difficult for us to understand why. Everything seems fine, and then one day, all of a sudden, somebody close to us is killed. We watch the news, and we find out that there was a huge tsunami and that millions of people have lost their homes. Or, there's a terrible war and we see that thousands of people are killed. Sometimes, it's difficult for us to understand why all of these things happen. Everything in this world is like those pieces of the puzzle that Ibrahim finds. On their own, they don't make a lot of sense and seem to be out of place and confusing to look at and understand. We might be curious as to the reason behind these various events and it might not make sense to us, and that's okay! Asking these questions and trying to understand the world can be a form of worship and help us trust in Allah (swt). Sometimes, we might understand parts of the puzzle, like the three pieces that Ibrahim found that fit together, but we won't really understand the whole picture since we are limited as human beings.



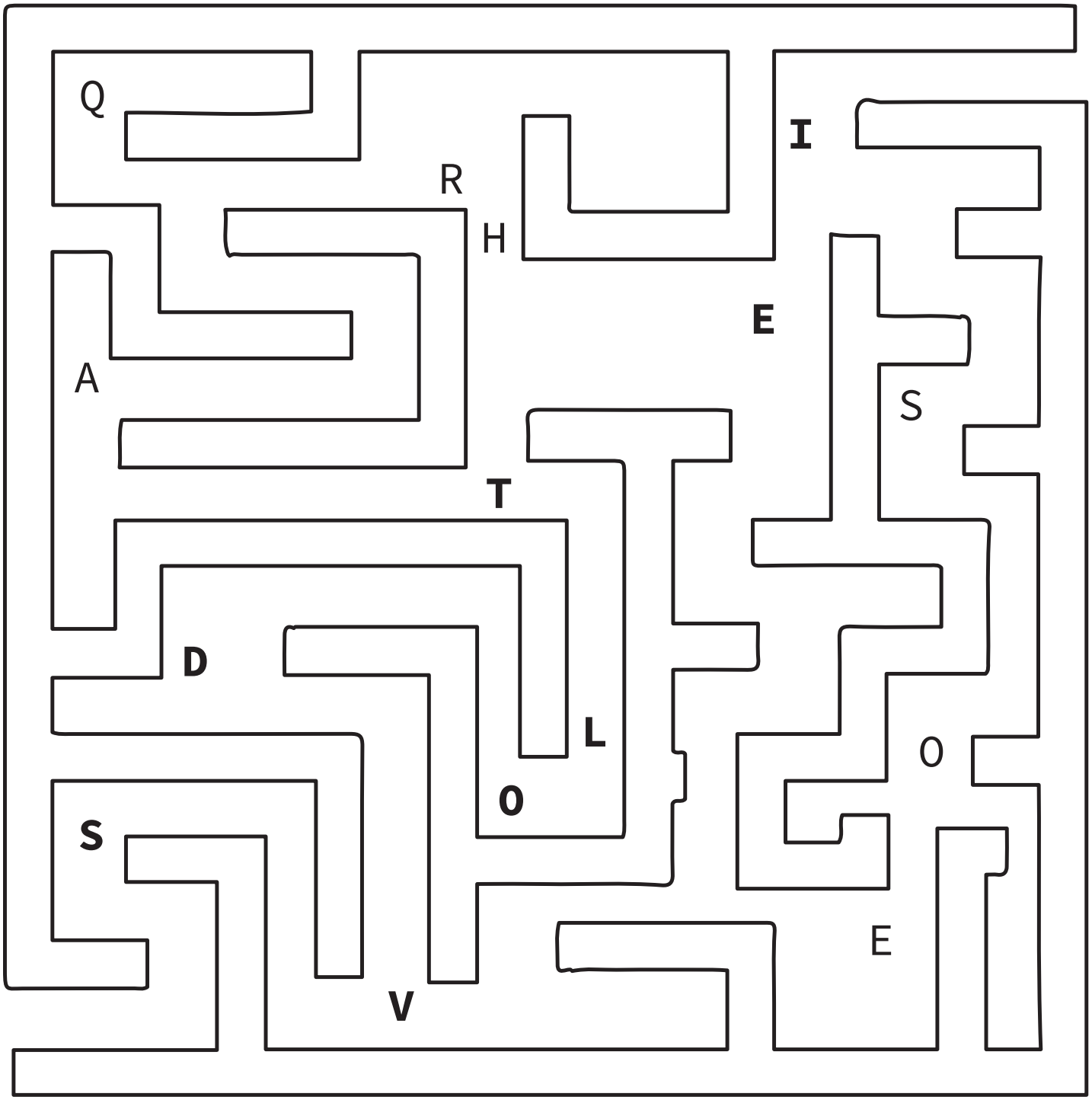
1 *Noble Qur'ān,* Ar-Rūm, 30:7

Activity 2.3a: Puzzle 1

The puzzles below have been provided to you without instructions. Independently or with a partner, can you decipher the puzzles?



Activity 2.3b: Puzzle 2



What are some clues in the puzzle pieces that helped you decide what steps to take to solve the puzzle(s)? Would you have benefitted from proper instructions to speed your progress or even accuracy along?

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Bad Choices

One of the reasons why apparently bad things happen in this world is because of our own choices and the choices of those around us. Allah (swt) has created us all with ʿ*aql* (reason) and given us free will. He has also told us and shown us that there are consequences to our actions. Allah does not want us to make bad choices, but He allows us to do so in order for our free will to really be "free". Bad choices can often have a negative effect on those who make them as well as others around them.

For example, if we act rashly or carelessly, we may get hurt or cause an accident. However, this is a consequence and result of our own actions. If we eat unhealthy foods, our bodies will become unhealthy too. Bad habits such as smoking and drinking can result in diseases as well as other problems. In the story, we saw that Ibrahim's uncle died because a drunk driver hit him. The driver's poor decisions and their turning to something *ḥarām*, like alcohol, was the reason for the death of another person. The wrong choices that the drunk driver made led to something bad not only for himself but for many other people.

A huge problem in the world is hunger. Why are some people extremely wealthy, while others struggle to find food to eat? Allah (swt) has created and provided plenty of resources for everyone in this world. However, many people will hoard their riches and even go as far as to steal resources that do not belong to them, or refuse to pay workers a fair wage. The wrong choices made by these people is what leads to others going hungry.

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) has said,

> "O son of Adam, whatever you earn beyond your basic needs, you are only a treasurer of it for others."[2]

When we have more than we need, we are responsible for helping others. Islam has encouraged charity, and it is even obligatory on us to give a certain portion of our extra wealth to the poor. If we follow these teachings correctly then the evil of hunger will disappear.

Then there are some problems like global warming, which we can clearly see are a consequence of our own actions. For example, the environmental crisis and global warming exist because of the amount of pollution that human beings have caused and how they have misused the earth's resources. Being wasteful and greedy can create chaos in the environment. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says, "Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of what people have done."[3]

2 *Nahj Al-Balāghah,* V. 2, Ḥadīth #192

3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ar-Rūm, 30:41

From the last two examples, we can understand that some of the world's problems are caused by human beings and can also be solved by them. However, what about those problems that humans cannot control? What about natural disasters that have always existed like earthquakes and tsunamis?

THINK ALOUD: Can you think of any man-made disasters that have been detrimental to life on Earth or caused temporary or long-lasting harm? What consequences has mankind faced as a result of these human choices?

Extension:

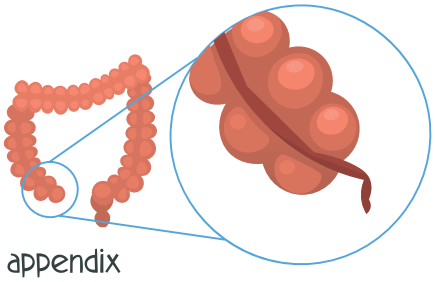
Working Independently or with a friend, think about something that happened that seemed to be horrible. It can be something personal (it has to have actually happened) or a story in the news. Why did you think it's a horrible thing? What are some of the reasons (using the reasons that we learned in the lesson) that Allah (swt) might have let this happen? Your story and explanation should be at least 15-20 lines long (written out on a separate piece of paper).

OUR UNDERSTANDING IS LIMITED

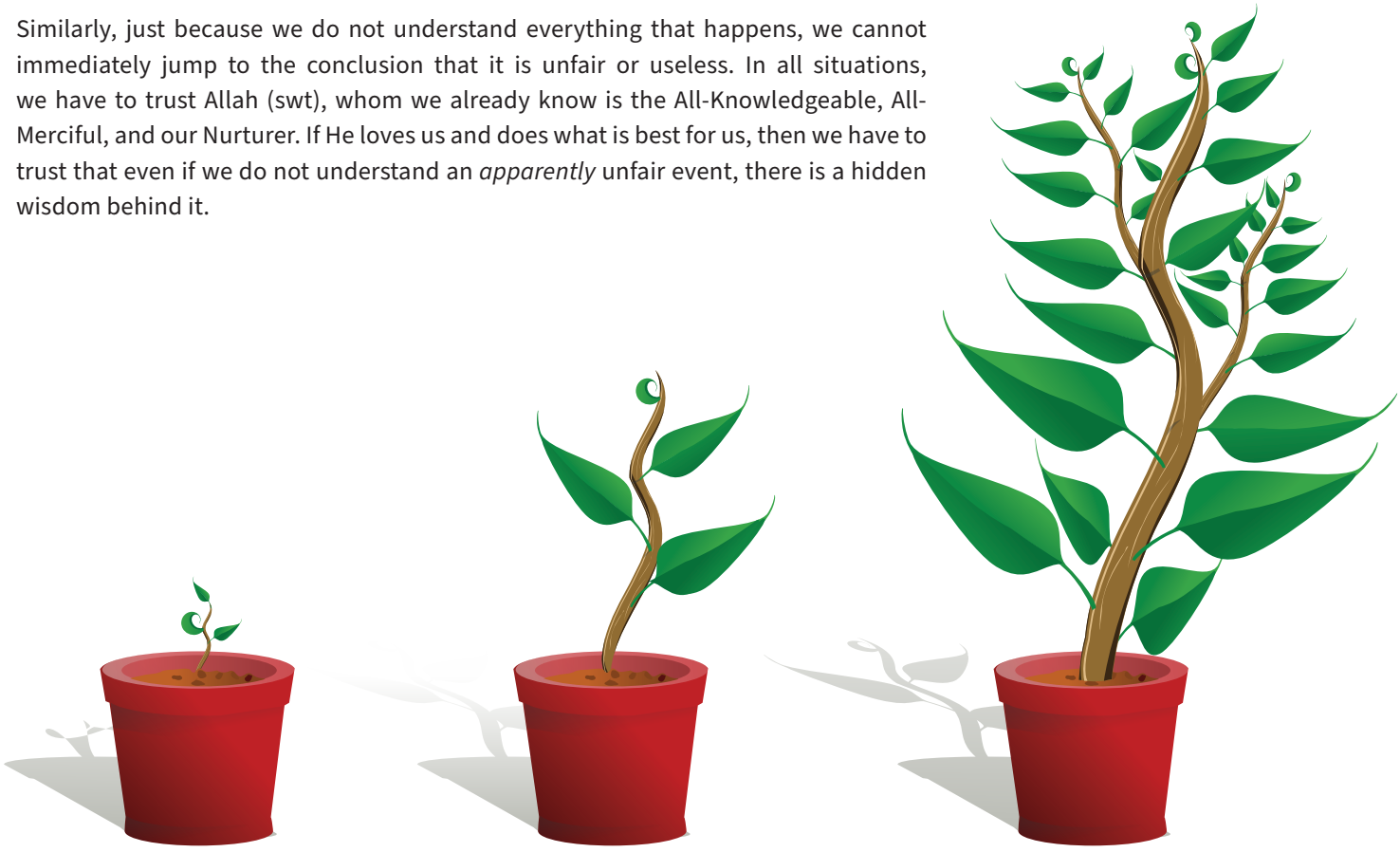
Sometimes, it is difficult for us to understand why something that is apparently bad has happened. You have probably noticed that we keep referring to bad things as *apparently* bad. This is because something might *seem* unfair or negative to us on the surface, but our perception of it is negative only because we can't see the whole picture. Try rolling up a piece of paper to look like a telescope and putting it over your eye. What can you see? You can only see what's directly in front of you, not on the sides, like you normally can. This is called tunnel vision, and this is an example of our limited understanding.

In the story, Ibrahim finds puzzle pieces, but he can't solve the puzzle because he doesn't know what the end picture looks like. He knows that the pieces somehow fit together, but looking at each piece individually leaves him very confused. Each piece of the puzzle looks very odd. They are different colors, and parts are sticking out. There are even random holes in them. These pieces only make sense when they are put together as a part of the beautiful picture that results. These puzzle pieces are like everything that happens to us in life. We might not understand it, and it might seem to be very ugly and negative, but the only reason it seems like this is because we can only see a part of the puzzle. Allah (swt), the puzzle-maker, sees the whole thing and knows what the end result and beautiful picture is. What might *seem* to us as unfair or apparently bad, has a deeper reason that we don't understand. Floods seem horrible, but actually, they bring fertile nutrients to the surface and can be really beneficial for farming. We have to be careful before labeling something as "bad" since we don't know the whole picture and as such, haven't understood it completely.

When we look at the human body, we see that it is so complex and intricate, and after thousands of years of existing as humans, we haven't yet fully understood how it works! One example is the appendix; we don't know for certain what the role of the appendix is, and many people thought it was useless. However, recent research has suggested that it might play an important role in storing bacteria that is good for our bodies.4 But, we don't know for sure. Just because we do not understand the function of the appendix this does not mean that we can say it is useless and that we should just remove it!



Similarly, just because we do not understand everything that happens, we cannot immediately jump to the conclusion that it is unfair or useless. In all situations, we have to trust Allah (swt), whom we already know is the All-Knowledgeable, All-Merciful, and our Nurturer. If He loves us and does what is best for us, then we have to trust that even if we do not understand an *apparently* unfair event, there is a hidden wisdom behind it.



4 https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/01/170109162333.htm

Activity 2.3c: A Matter of Perspective

Think of three issues or events that may have *both* pros and cons depending on how you approach the subject. Record them in the chart below:

SUBJECT 1:

PROs	CONs

SUBJECT 2:

PROs	CONs

SUBJECT 3:

PROs	CONs

THE REAL SOLUTION

The two factors that we explored above are important in trying to understand why things that seem to be negative occur. Sometimes, they are consequences of our own actions, and sometimes they're not actually bad — we just haven't understood them properly. In the story, when Ibrahim realizes that he doesn't know how to solve the puzzle, an āyah of the Qur'ān appears on the screen. This āyah says that we, as humans, "know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter."5 The verse is telling us that we only see part of the picture in this world, but we don't always think about or take the Hereafter into consideration. While the other two factors above helped us make sense of suffering in the world, the puzzle only makes sense when we have the entire picture — and that entire picture includes the Hereafter!

We were not created for this world, and this world by its nature, is imperfect and limited. It does not have the ability to be perfect. You might be wondering, what does this mean? Imagine you have a huge bucket and you want to fill it with all of the water that exists in this world. No matter how hard you try, you won't be able to. Why? Because the bucket has a limited capacity. Similarly, this temporary world that we are currently in doesn't have the ability or capacity to be perfect in all areas.

On the other hand, the Hereafter, the next world, is eternal. By its very nature, it is perfect and not limited. True justice can be achieved in the Hereafter, because it is not limited. In this world, we might see two individuals — one who is suffering from extreme poverty and one who is thriving in extreme wealth. As we mentioned earlier, this is because we are not doing our responsibility by sharing the resources that Allah (swt) has given us. But what did that poor person do to deserve this? Why should they be punished for someone else doing something wrong?

Our limited understanding prevents us from seeing Allah's (swt) ultimate justice. Now think about the Hereafter, and how much the person who is suffering from poverty might be rewarded for their patience. Think about getting a shot or vaccination at the hospital; the 30 seconds of pain that you feel is not really unjust because in the long run, it can benefit you and is only temporary.

The same goes for this world, it is temporary, and so is the pain we feel in it. In the long run, this pain will definitely benefit us if we remain patient!

Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said about those who face calamities but remain patient,

> "Allah (swt) will compensate them so much that if they were given the opportunity to come back to this world to experience those difficulties again they would prefer to come back to gain more rewards."[6]

Allah (swt) is *Al-ʿAdl*, the All-Just, and this justice makes complete sense when we take the Hereafter into consideration and that it is part of the overall picture.

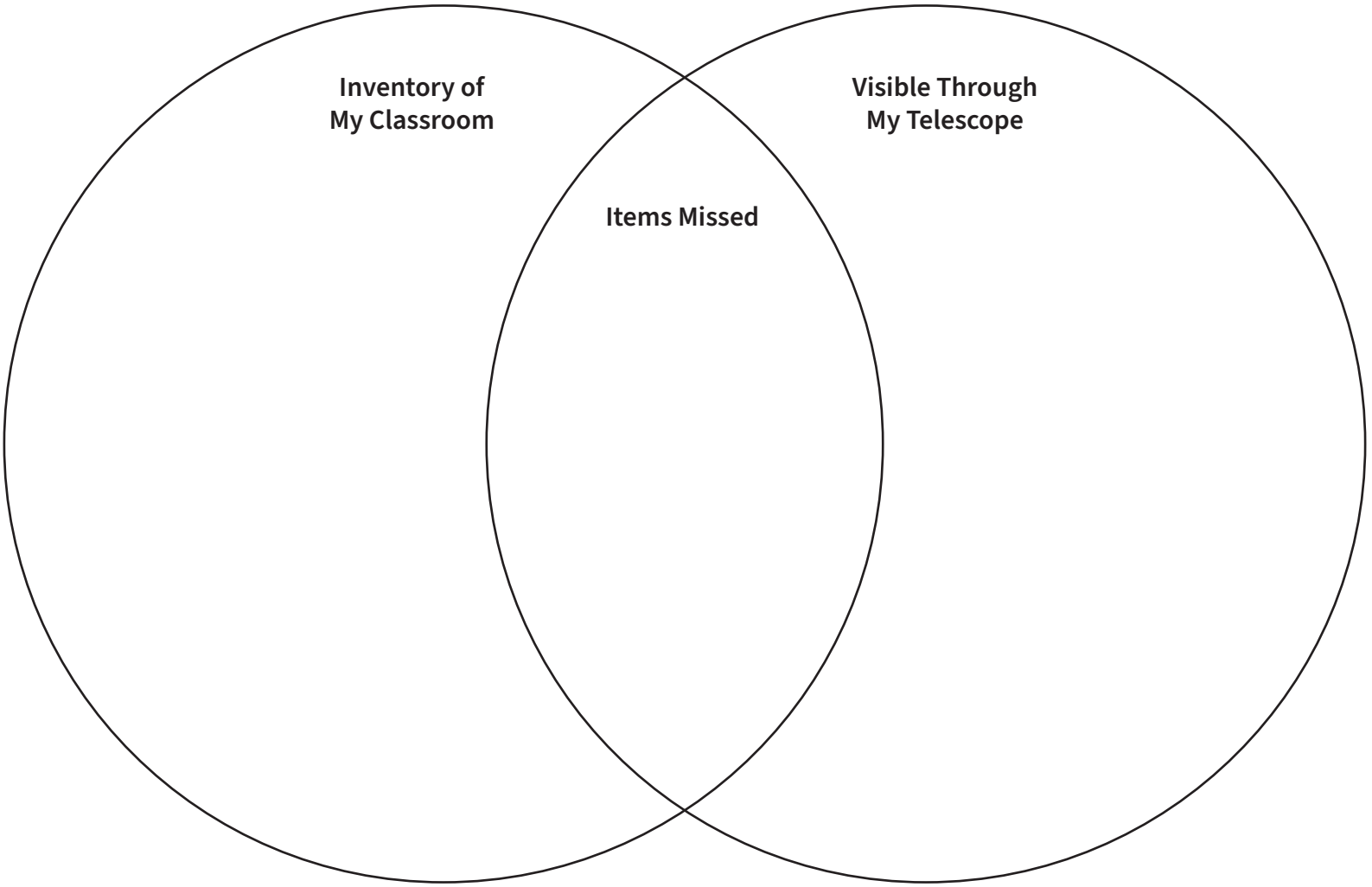
Allah (swt) is our *Rabb*, and through His mercy and wisdom, He wants to guide us towards our purpose in becoming closer to Him. He wants what is best for us and for us to get to *jannah*. We can use the hardships in our lives as a way to grow in the best way possible, and trust that these hardships have the potential to be what is best for us. When we keep the Hereafter in mind the supposed injustices that we see in the world make more sense!

5 *Noble Qur'ān,* Ar-Rūm, 30:7

6 *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 3, P. 71

Activity 2.3d: Tunnel Vision

Choose a full wall in your classroom/learning space and take inventory of everything that you see. Now, roll up a piece of paper into a telescope approximately 2-3 inches in diameter. Describe the items you're able to see through your telescope. How many items on your list would you have never known existed if your vision was always limited to the space within your paper telescope? What could this metaphor mean for our "vision" in this world?



Key Points

- Many of the world's problems are a result and consequence of our own poor choices (cause and effect)
- Our limited understanding prevents us from seeing Allah's wisdom behind certain seemingly unfair incidents
- True justice cannot be achieved in this world because it is limited; it can only be achieved in the next world
- We must use the hardships in our lives as a means to grow and reach our purpose

Summary Questions

1. Why do bad things happen to us?

2. Why don't we understand everything that happens in this world?

3. Is this world just? What is justice?

4. Why do we have to face difficulties in life?

Allah's (swt) Justice Worksheet 2.3e

Read the following verses. What do these verses tell you about why bad things happen in the world?

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿41﴾

Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people's hands, that He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they may come back.[7]

وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّـهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Yet it may be that you dislike something, which is good for you, and it may be that you love something, which is bad for you, and Allah knows and you do not know.[8]

7 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ar-Rūm, 30:41

8 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:216

CHAPTER 3

Divine Guides

3.1 The Need for Divine Guide
3.2 Why We Need Prophets
3.3 From Prophethood to Imāmah
3.4 ʿIsmah
3.5 An Introduction to the Noble Qurʾān

3.1 The Need for Divine Guide

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn about the external guidance provided by Allah (swt).
- Understand why guides were sent to help humans fulfill their purpose.
- Consider the tools guides were given by Allah (swt) to help mankind.
- Explore the reasons why guides are necessary to understand the religion.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 7: THE MYSTERIOUS GARDEN

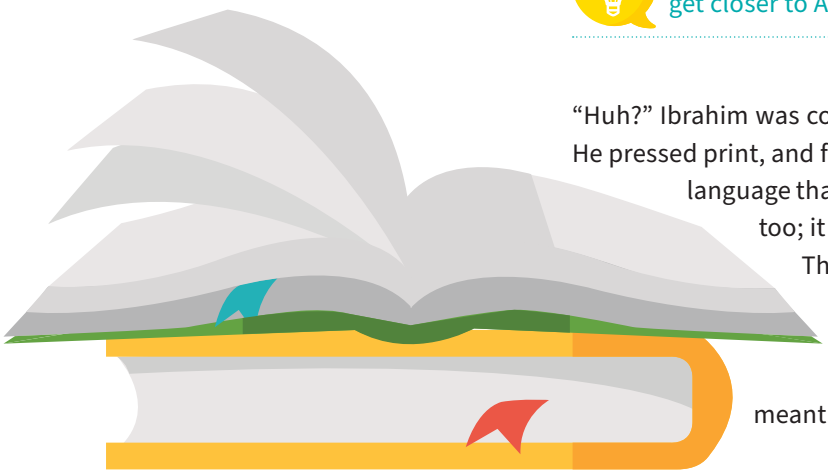
Ibrahim wakes up in a mysterious garden, and is given clues and tests that help him realize his purpose. He needs to figure out what to do to achieve his purpose. He gains knowledge of Allah through solving puzzles on a computer he finds, and understands that these difficulties are going to help him grow. He needs to get to the water fountain and does not know what lies ahead.

Ibrahim had succeeded at yet another test on the computer, and he had no idea what was awaiting him next. He had now figured out that if he was able to pass the tests that were being given to him, somehow, he would end up on the other side, with access to the water fountain. Allah (swt) had put him here for a reason! He felt overwhelmed with a sense of love for Allah (swt). His mercy and beauty was more than Ibrahim had ever imagined, and now Ibrahim wanted to get as close to Him as possible!

He walked over to the computer screen and waited for something to happen. Ibrahim was ready for his next task, but nothing was happening — it was as though the computer had died or lost power. He started to press the screen, drawing random shapes, hoping that something would happen. There was no touch keyboard, so he didn't know how to type or input into the computer. Instead, he just used his fingers and wrote, "Help me! What do I do next?" All of a sudden, he heard a whirring sound and a new message appeared on the screen:

Ibrahim! You know that you need to get to the other side of the glass wall, and it is only there that your thirst will be fully quenched. If you truly love Allah and want to serve Him, you'll get there. Many challenging tasks await you in order for you to get there. [Print]

THINK ALOUD: What do you think the computer will print to help Ibrahim get closer to Allah (swt) and travel to the other side of the wall?



"Huh?" Ibrahim was confused. This time, the computer hadn't even assigned a task. He pressed print, and from the 3D printer, a book printed. He opened it up. It was in a language that was oddly familiar — it was Arabic! He'd seen the book before too; it was the Qurʾān. He grinned since he knew what the book was. Then, another book printed; on the cover, it said "Dictionary." Even though he was familiar with the Qurʾān and had read it, he had only ever read the whole thing in Arabic. He had only read parts of it in English. He had no idea what most of it meant. So, the dictionary would probably come in handy.

He opened the Qurʾān, staring at the Arabic, and tried to look some of the words up in a dictionary. It was really complicated. He felt kind of regretful that he hadn't tried this before. He'd been reading the Qurʾān his entire life, and knew that it was supposed to be a source of guidance for him, but he didn't even know what it said! After an hour of looking through the dictionary and piecing together some words he knew, he was able to figure out a few sentences, like the following:

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify (explain) for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect.[1]

Wow! Ibrahim was amazed — the Qurʾān was telling him that Allah (swt) had sent the Prophet (ṣ) to explain the Qurʾān for him. It had guided him, even in one sentence!

No wonder the Qurʾān was a true source of guidance! He felt enlightened now that he knew there was a source of help with the Prophet (ṣ). As soon as this thought came to his mind, he heard a shuffling noise. He glanced up and looked at the glass wall. The gray-haired man wearing the glasses that he'd seen earlier was back, but he was still on the other side of the glass wall! And had seen him! And was trying to communicate with him! He jumped up and grinned. "Salāmun ʿalaykum!" Ibrahim said, "Can you show me how to get out of here? I'm stuck!" The old man smiled and casually walked through the glass walls and came up to Ibrahim. Ibrahim's face went pale. How did he walk through a wall?

"Wa ʿalaykum salām, Ibrahim!" said the old man. "Don't be scared! The glass walls are your own barriers — they only exist for you. I don't have the same barriers, so I can walk wherever I want in this garden, including the other side. The barriers represent your sins and bad qualities."

THINK ALOUD: Why do you think Ibrahim's sins and bad qualities manifest as barriers between him and Allah (swt). How might sins affect Ibrahim and work against his journey to learn more about and become closer to Allah (swt)?

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Naḥl, 16:44

Ibrahim was amazed. "So, it is possible to get to the other side?"

The old man nodded and continued talking. "It is possible, but you can't do it without help or someone showing you how. You were able to understand Allah (swt) to a small degree using your own ʿaql (intellect) and fiṭrah (innate disposition), but now you've reached a point where that's not enough and you need something more. You came asking for guidance, and Allah (swt) will provide it for you through His book and people that can guide you!" Ibrahim furrowed his eyebrows and then smiled. Who was he? Could this man show him the way?

So far, we have learnt that our purpose is to attain closeness to Allah (swt) and to reach our perfection by worshipping Allah (swt) and doing good deeds with the intention of gaining the pleasure of Allah (swt). We've also learned about some of the characteristics of Allah (swt), like how He is the All-Merciful. He wants us to reach this purpose, and because of that, He has given us internal guides to do so.

These internal guides include our ʿaql (reason) and fiṭrah (our God-seeking human nature). However, these two tools are not enough to get us all the way to perfection.

In this story, Ibrahim has reached a certain level through these tools, but is now at a point where he's not sure what he is supposed to do. Our knowledge and Ibrahim's knowledge is limited; we don't know about the unseen world, and our fiṭrah can become contaminated through sinning, which clouds our ability to make good decisions aligned with what Allah (swt) wants. Allah (swt) has sent us divinely appointed guides who teach us the guidelines that we need to follow in order to be successful in reaching our purpose.

Activity 3.1a: Expert Advice!

There are many moments in our lives when we reach the limit of our abilities or knowledge and seek external guidance from experts. Whether it be calling a tutor to help with math or reading a researcher's study on whether or not a vaccine is effective, at some point or another all of us have had the need for some external guidance in our lives. Think about a situation in which you needed help from an "expert." Answer questions below with that situation in mind.

1. What problem were you facing?

2. How did you know you needed to call an expert? What indicated to you that you had reached the limit of your knowledge?

3. What expert did you call on or refer to for help? Why did you choose that expert in particular? What qualities were you looking for in your expert?

THE NEED FOR DIVINELY APPOINTED GUIDES

Imagine that your school prepared a huge award ceremony at the end of the year for those who excelled in their studies. The principal and administration wanted as many students as possible to receive the award. Imagine that all of this was set up, and then the school administration never told any student how they could receive the award. Would that make any sense? Similarly, would it make sense that Allah (swt) has prepared a great reward for us in Jannah, wants all of us to reach Jannah, but then wouldn't show us how to get there? Of course not!

Allah is All-Beneficent and All-Merciful and He has guaranteed that he will provide us with guidance. It's His promise! In the Qurʾān He says "Surely, it is on Us [i.e. Allah] to guide."[2]

Allah (swt) has also told us that He will hold us responsible for our actions on the Day of Judgment. Would it be fair for Him to hold us accountable if He did not tell us what we would be held accountable for? Imagine that your teacher gave you a test, but never taught you the material, and then punished you for it. Would that be fair? No, it wouldn't. Alḥamdulillāh, Allah (swt) is just and merciful, and He has given us leaders and teachers who have taught us about His guidelines. Allah (swt) has given us all of these guidelines as a mercy to help us and to give us something that will only please us. Our lives are a gift from Allah (swt) — He doesn't benefit from us at all! When we think about life like this, that He has given us guidance and a chance to get to somewhere like Jannah, and then shown us exactly how to do that, it is a beautiful portrayal of His mercy.

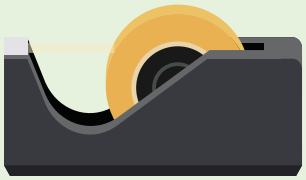
As we discussed earlier, Allah (swt) has sent us guidelines in the form of religion — but how do we get these guidelines and religion? How does Allah (swt) send them to us? We know that we've been given a divine book, the Qurʾān. It contains some of these guidelines and rules to follow, but it also guides us to something more, which is the importance of referring to the Prophets and Imāms as role models and leaders.

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Layl, 92:12

Activity 3.1b

Students should take out 2 sheets of paper, markers, scissors, and glue/tape. Working independently and completely silently, students should make a house using their materials. After 5 - 10 minutes, students should all keep their houses on their desks and walk around to see each others' creations.

As a class, discuss how everyone's creations differed.

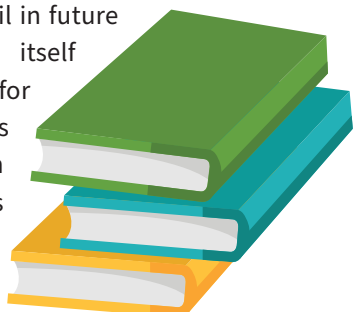


- Why and how did houses differ?
- What was missing from the activity to ensure everyone had the same outcome?
- If the materials and the goal ("make a house") were the same for everyone, why didn't everyone make the same thing?
- How does this relate to our need for a guide in Islam?

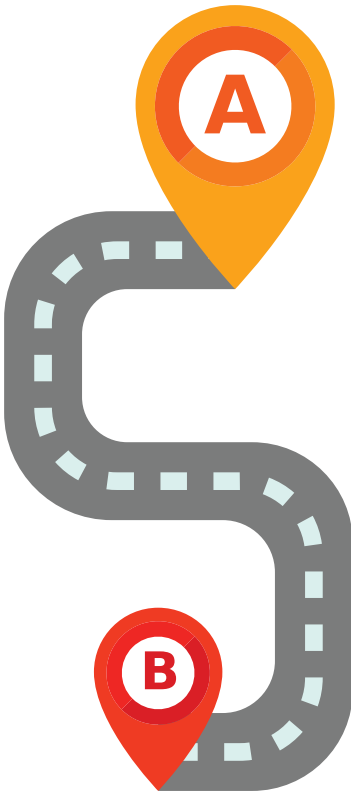
Story connection:

In the story, Ibrahim was given a book and a dictionary, but he realized that this wasn't enough. In fact, the Qurʾān itself told him that in order to understand it properly, he needed to refer to divine guides.

Imagine that instead of going to school, you just had a pile of books to read. It wouldn't be an effective way to learn. We need teachers to explain these textbooks in order for us to get a true understanding. The Qurʾān isn't like other books and can still benefit us even when we don't understand all of the words, but understanding it and getting explanations is an important part of being completely guided (we will learn about the Qurʾān in more detail in future lessons) In fact, the Qurʾān itself tells us to go to divine guides for help in explaining its words and guiding us in our lives. In the story, the wise old man is there to help Ibrahim get an explanation for the book.



We know that the divine guides that Allah (swt) has chosen have succeeded and are the most qualified to guide us.



WHO ARE THE DIVINELY APPOINTED GUIDES?

THINK ALOUD: We know that our purpose in life is to become as close to Allah (swt) as possible. If we have divinely appointed guides to help us do this, what should they be like? Why?

How would Allah (swt) choose the most qualified individuals to help us get closest to Him? It only makes sense that these individuals are as close to Allah (swt) as is possible. It wouldn't make sense for Allah (swt) to choose mediocre individuals who aren't really close to Him to show us how we can be close to Him. Imagine if you wanted to become the best athlete in the world: would you ask your friend to train you or an Olympic athlete who you know has succeeded? Initially, you might get a friend who is really good to train you, but if you want to excel, you would want to go for the best.

We know that the divine guides that Allah (swt) has chosen have succeeded and are the most qualified to guide us. They have made good choices with Godly intentions their entire lives and have reached a level of perfection and closeness to Allah (swt) that makes them worthy of being followed which is why Allah has chosen them to guide us. Furthermore, Allah (swt) helps them guide us by strengthening them with certain tools. One of these tools is a special type of knowledge given to them by Allah (swt). They have a complete understanding of not only this world, but also the unseen world. In the previous unit, we discussed the fact that usually when we look at something, we're not looking at the whole picture. However, our divine guides are looking at the entire picture, and they know what the consequences of our actions are in the next world. They have this knowledge with the permission of Allah (swt).

Another tool that Allah (swt) has given them is ʿismah. ʿIsmah is a special type of protection that Allah (swt) grants to those who have attained a certain level of taqwā through hard work and obedience. We will learn more about ʿismah in the upcoming lessons. With these tools, our divine guides, the Prophets and Imāms, are fully equipped to guide us to the best end!

MORE ABOUT THE DIVINE GUIDES

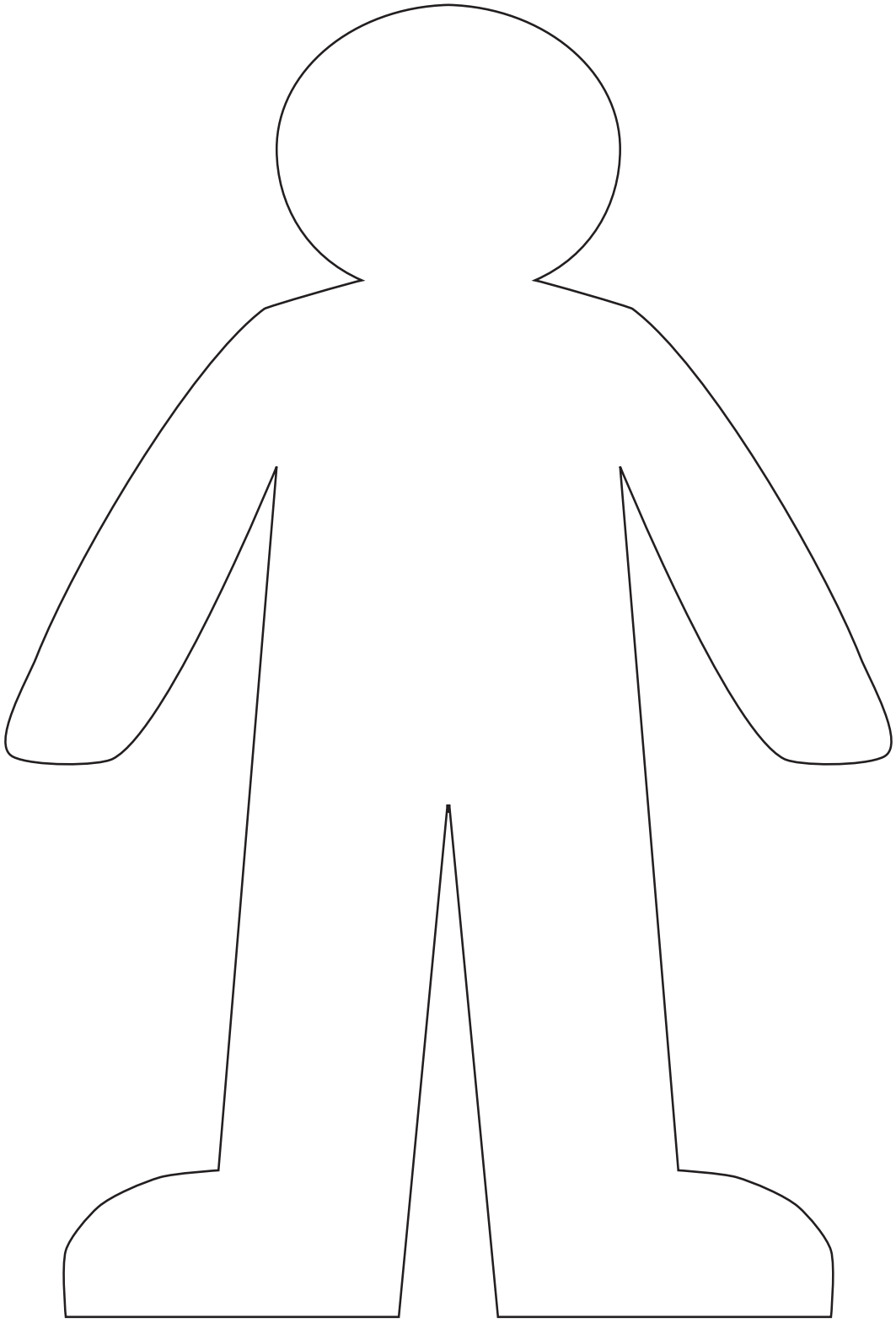
We know that the Prophets and Imāms have been appointed and sent to help us out and to guide us toward becoming more perfect individuals. But what did they do throughout their lives and what was their relationship like with those around them? The Prophets were sent all over the world. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) has said that a messenger was sent to every nation.[3] These Prophets were known to their communities as trustworthy individuals that had always been honest and hard-working; helping others and never hurting anyone. They did their best to lead their communities to perfection and were the perfect role models for them.

Often, when we think about real leaders, we think of a CEO who sits at a desk and orders everybody around and who makes a lot of money. However, this was not what the Prophets and Imāms were like. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) constantly mentions how these divinely appointed guides did not want any type of money or reward for guiding people.

3 *Noble Qurʾān*, An-Naḥl, 16:36

Activity 3.1c: What's in a Leader?

In pairs, think about the qualities of a good leader. What motivates them, what do they do, how do they deal with issues, etc. Surround the image below with the qualities you think of and link each quality with either the hands (doing things), the head (motivations), or feet (how they deal with difficulties or roadblocks, how they would guide others).



KEY POINTS:

- The ʿaql and fiṭrah are not enough to guide us completely and can only get us so far.
- We also need guidance and explanations like the Qurʾān, which can be explained further through a teacher or guide.
- Allah (swt), in His kindness and mercy, has given us divine guides known as the Prophets and Imāms
- These divine guides didn't want anything in return from the people that they were guiding; all they wanted was to obey Allah (swt) and to become closer to Him by fulfilling their responsibilities.

Many of the Prophets would say to their people,

> "I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds."

This exact phrase is repeated five times in Sūrah Ash-Shūrā for different Prophets — they all said the same thing!

They truly cared for their communities and just wanted what was best for them. In fact, all of the Prophets would fend for themselves and had jobs on the side. Many of them were farmers or traders and worked really hard. This shows their humbleness and how they were true guides; they had nothing to gain from it! The only thing they wanted was for everybody to be guided. Like Allah (swt), they loved everyone and wanted everyone to succeed in this world and the next.

In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says that the message of every Prophet was to "Worship Allah and reject false gods." Unfortunately, many times, people would make fun of the Prophets and refuse to listen to them, even though it was for their own good and the Prophets were acting in the kindest of ways. They not only told people how to get closer to Allah (swt), but they showed them through their own actions and by setting an example.

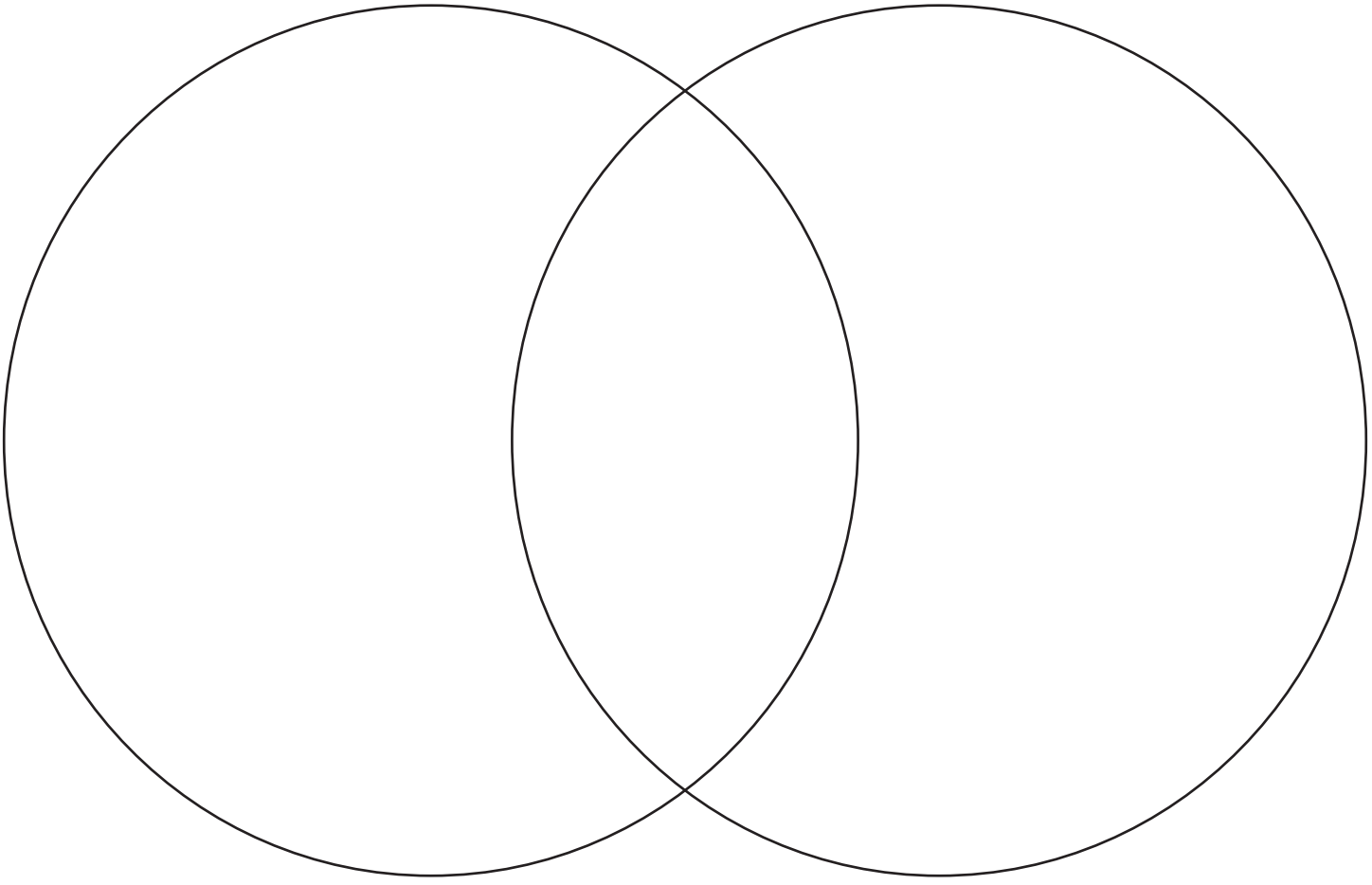
CONCLUSION

Allah (swt) has given us all the tools we need to reach our purpose. He has given us internal guides like the ʿaql and the fiṭrah, and external guides, like the Qurʾān and divinely appointed guides. All of these things help us in our journey to Allah (swt) and becoming close to Him. If we do not learn from them and take advantage of these tools, we will not have any excuse on the Day of Judgment!

Activity 3.1d: Gains and Guidance

The reading tells us that we are given and need two types of guidance - internal (ʿaql and fiṭrah) and external (Qurʾān and divinely appointed guides).

Use the venn diagram below to explore the purposes and relationship between the different guides Allah (swt) has given us. What is the difference between our internal and external guides? Why do you think Allah (swt) has given us both kinds of guidance? How do they work together? What are some examples of situations in which we use each kind of guidance?



Worksheet 3.1e: Divine Guides

Read the following verses. What do these verses tell you about divine guides?

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْـهُدَىٰ

Surely, it is Our (Allah's) responsibility to give guidance.[4]

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّـهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

Allah certainly favoured the faithful when He brought from them a Prophet from among themselves to read to them His signs and to purify them and teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they were indeed in a clear error.[5]

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Layl, 92:12

5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Āle ʿImrān, 3:164

1. Think back to the house activity. Do you think the class would have been more successful if the teacher had showed you a sample house or walked you through how to use your materials to create the house?

2. What two tools are the divine guides given? Why do you think Allah (swt) has given them these tools - how might they help in guiding the people?

3. How does the existence of religious guides show us the mercy of Allah (swt)?

3.2 Why We Need Prophets

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the need for divinely appointed guides
- Discover the difficulty of prophethood
- Explore that characteristics that prophets used to overcome the difficulties they faced (ṣabr, Istiqāmah, Khushūʿ and Khuḍūʿ, Ikhlāṣ, Tawaḍuʿ)

Story Recap:

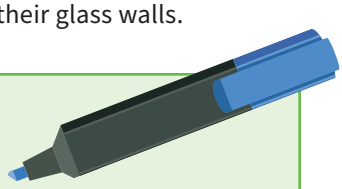
Ibrahim is a young man who wakes up in a garden, and needs to get some water to survive. He realizes his purpose for being in the garden, and after a series of tests he meets an older man who tells him that in addition to ʿaql and fiṭrah, we need guides. The Creator has provided these in the form of divine books and divinely chosen people.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 8: THE WISE OLD MAN

Ibrahim and the wise old man walked around the garden together for hours. Every so often, Ibrahim would bump into one of his glass walls, but the old man wouldn't. Ibrahim was amazed at how much the man knew, and he thought to himself, "Who could this man be?"

Just then, the wise old man told him that his name was Saduq, and that he had been named after the famous Shīʿah scholar Shaykh Al-Saduq, who had written a lot about the Islamic belief system. The old man had studied religion for many years in the noble cities of Najaf and Qom, and now roamed the world working as a trader, as he helped others like Ibrahim find their way and break down their glass walls.

Activity 3.2a



Shaykh al-Saduq was an incredible scholar and played an integral role in creating texts that we use to this day! If you've enjoyed a majlis, chances are you owe something to Shaykh al-Saduq! Take a moment at home to research what books he wrote and his life's work.

Saduq's beard was full and grey, and accented the dark color of his glasses. He seemed wise, and it was clear that he knew so much about the world around him. The two walked for hours together, and Saduq taught Ibrahim many things. Even though there was a huge age gap between them, Ibrahim appreciated how much Saduq knew from all that he had learned throughout his life. He was 75 years old! Ibrahim decided to call him Uncle Saduq.

Saduq taught him about everything, and as they walked in the garden, Saduq even helped Ibrahim break down some of his glass walls. Ibrahim, like any other person in the world, had some problems with his behavior. Saduq helped him address some of these issues, and every time he fixed one of them, a glass wall came crashing down! [You're probably wondering how they came crashing down, but you're going to find out later!]

The two walked for hours, and soon, Saduq began to tell Ibrahim about the greatest individuals to walk the face of the earth. They were connected to Allah (swt), and Allah (swt) had chosen them to represent Him. He couldn't imagine ever attaining such an honorable position with the Creator. He wanted to be like them so much — but their status was only because of their taqwā, God-consciousness, and dedication to Allah (swt). They were the most perfect individuals, and the way in which Saduq spoke of them was inspiring. Ibrahim had never thought about the Prophets in the way that Saduq mentioned. From the amazing stories of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) to Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) to Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) - there was so much to learn.

"Ibrahim, I need you to listen very carefully. I'm about to tell you the most important things about the divine guides, and it's this information about them that is going to help you and be relevant for you. It will help you pass these tests and get to the other side of the glass wall."

Ibrahim's eyes widened, and he listened intently as Saduq began to tell him about some of the greatest men to walk the face of the earth.

Ibrahim, do you want to know more about these individuals?

"Yes!" Ibrahim cried out eagerly. "I want to know about their most powerful characteristics. What was it about them that was so special that they were assigned to be Prophets by Allah (swt) and that Allah (swt) helped them with certain blessings?

THINK ALOUD: What do you think the Prophets' most powerful characteristics were?

"Pay attention, Ibrahim. These are no ordinary people. They are humans specially chosen by Allah (swt). And their stories are no ordinary stories."

DIVINELY APPOINTED GUIDES

Out of His infinite kindness and mercy, Allah (swt) has sent us guides to show us how to become closer to Him in the best way possible. Sometimes, we think that Allah (swt) created us and then just left us and watches what we do, but this isn't true! He is continuously helping us and has sent us guides to help us along the way.

Out of His infinite kindness and mercy, Allah (swt) has sent us guides to show us how to become closer to Him in the best way possible.

THINK ALOUD: A common question that people used to ask these Prophets, and something you might be wondering, too, is why didn't Allah (swt) just send us angels to tell us what to do?

The reason why Allah (swt) didn't simply send angels to teach us is because our guides are also our role models, and they should be human beings so that we can relate and connect to them. They are humans just like us, so we can see the possibility of what we can be like when we look at them.

In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says that He did not send "any Messenger except that they spoke the language of their people"[1] and that He sent messengers who were humans and had "spouses and offspring"[2] and "ate food and walked in the markets."[3]

When we know that our divine guides are humans, we realize that they understand our struggles and difficulties because they, too, have gone through these difficulties. They went through pain and hardships, but showed us how to overcome these hardships with our īmān, faith. They showed us that by making good choices, we, too, can reach a higher status. These divine guides, like our Prophets, Imāms, and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), are all our role models who show us how to live and behave in every area of our lives. It is important to learn about their qualities so that we can learn how to follow in their footsteps to reach spiritual perfection. Think about it; if you wanted to become rich, wouldn't you want to follow the instructions of the richest person in the world? If you want to become spiritually rich, and the closest that you can be to Allah (swt), don't you want to follow the footsteps of those who are closest to Allah (swt) and the most perfect of all?

KEY POINTS

- Allah sent Prophets as role models and Messengers that were human so that they are relatable examples for us that we can try to be like. Allah gives us messages through them and guides us through them.
- Prophets are divine guides; they are humans, but have also been granted special tools from Allah to help them in their mission, which is to pass us messages and connect us to Allah.
- We can learn many lessons from the Prophets and their spiritual perfection and closeness to Allah.
- Some of the qualities of the Prophets were ṣabr, ikhlāṣ, khushūʿ, and khuḍūʿ.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ibrāhīm, 14:4
2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ar-Raʿd, 13:38
3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Furqān, 25:20

Activity 3.2b: Karbala and Me

Think about the tragedy of Karbala - the different people who were there and what they went through. Choose one person or one struggle from the tragedy that relates to you and has helped you grow as a person. Write a paragraph about how that part of the story of Karbala helped you as a person and as a Muslim.

THE DIFFICULT MISSION

Before we can begin to understand the qualities of the Prophets and how they were role models, we have to understand the significance of their responsibilities.They were not only chosen and sent by Allah, but they were also strengthened by Him! Allah (swt) helped them by granting them certain tools. Being a role model and guide for all of mankind is not an easy task. Every Prophet and Imām was doubted by people that wanted to seek power for themselves, and called names by the arrogant. However, in response to even the worst of people, they would respond to the people with the utmost kindness .

Patience and Perseverance (Ṣabr— صبر and Istiqamah)

All of the Prophets had the very noble characteristic of ṣabr, which means to remain calm and confident in the power of Allah (swt) despite facing great difficulties and continuing to try to achieve one's goal. They also had perseverance (Istiqaman), which is to keep going and not give up despite facing great difficulties and obstacles.

Imagine playing on a sports team where all other players are knocking one person down and pushing him down. Imagine that that person doesn't let them push him down, and that he keeps trying and trying and never gives up, continuing to persevere and do his best. This is ṣabr — it is a proactive characteristic that all of the Prophets had. Even after the tough time that so many people gave them, no matter how many hardships they went through, they still remained firm in spreading their mission.

Sincerity (Ikhlāṣ —اخلاص)

Ikhlāṣ means sincerity, and this was another quality that was found in all of the Prophets. All of their actions were purely for the sake of Allah (swt). What this means is that they did not want any type of reward or gift for whatever beneficial thing they did. They were doing it purely for Allah's sake, in obedience to Him. In the previous lesson, we mentioned their sincerity and that in the Qur'ān, Allah (swt) quotes several Prophets saying the same thing: "I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord." They did not gain any money from their position of Prophethood, and often it made their lives much more difficult.

When Prophet Shuʿayb (ʿa) went to the people of Madyan and told them to stop cheating other people out of their money, they laughed at him. They even told him that he was weak and that if it wasn't for his tribe and family, they would kill him![4] What did Prophet Shuʿayb (ʿa) have to gain from doing this? The only thing that he gained from doing this was the pleasure of Allah (swt). On the command of Allah (swt), he was only trying to help the people of Madyan, who were eventually punished and destroyed because they did not listen to Allah's message.

Humility (Khushūʿ and Khuḍūʿ— خشوع/ خضوع)

Another common trait amongst all 124,000 of our Prophets was that they were very humble. But what does it mean to be truly humble? Firstly, they were humble in their hearts before Allah (swt). Even though they had high spiritual positions, they still considered themselves to be low in front of Allah, the most High. They not only had **khuḍū**ʿ, which is outward humbleness, but they also had **khushū**ʿ, which means they had true inner humility and awe of Allah (swt) as well.

Secondly, they had **tawaḍu**ʿ, which is humbleness in relation to people. Their **tawaḍu**ʿ towards people was a manifestation of their **khuḍū**ʿ and **khushū**ʿ in relation to Allah (swt). They did not consider themselves to be too good to do anything and did not believe that certain groups of people were better than others. They knew that they were just humble servants of Allah (swt), and that everything they had been given was from Allah (swt). They ate and walked in the same places as everyone else.[5] They sat with others, and in fact, they often spent time with the poorest members of society. They wore simple clothes and shoes, and they always used their money to help others. They never took advantage of other people, nor did they expect people to serve them. This is a true example of leadership, where you live amongst the people and serve them, rather than expecting something in return.

4 *Noble Qur'ān,* Hūd, 11:91

5 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Furqān, 25:20

Homework Activity 3.2c:

Fill in the chart below

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE OF HOW WE CAN APPLY IT IN OUR OWN LIVES
Ṣabr		
Istiqāmah		
Khushūʿ		
Khuḍūʿ		
Tawaḍuʿ		
Ikhlāṣ		

1. Why did the Prophets of Allah (swt) have such high statuses? (Hint: the reading mentions 3 reasons)

2. Why is it important that Allah (swt) sent humans to guide us? Why didn't he send angels?

Story Assignment 3.2d

Directions: One of the ways that Ibrahim can break down the glass walls is by getting rid of his spiritual defects or bad qualities and bad habits. In this lesson, we learned about three qualities that the Prophets had. Think about their opposite qualities which would be bad qualities.

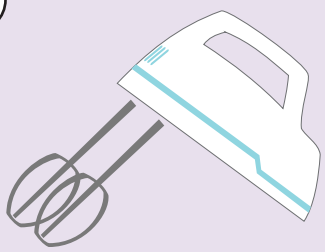
POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Ṣabr: PATIENCE/ PERSEVERANCE	
Ikhlāṣ: SINCERITY	
Khushūʿ and Khuḍūʾ: HUMILITY	

The story also mentioned that Saduq taught Ibrahim how to break down some of his glass walls. Choose two of the negative qualities above and write a story about Ibrahim breaking these walls down and how Saduq taught him. Make sure to use practical advice that you and others can implement when trying to get rid of these negative qualities.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Stories should be at least 2 pages long, double-spaced, written out by hand.
- You must have a planning page where you plan out your story before you write it.
- Make sure that spellings and grammar is correct!
- You need to include the two negative qualities

INGREDIENTS OF A STORY 1



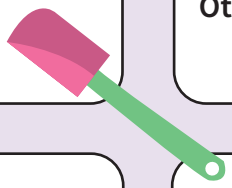
Think about your story and fill in each element below.

Working Title:

SETTING

Place(s):

Time(s):



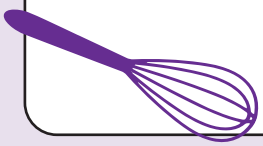
CHARACTERS

Protagonist:

Antagonist:

Others:

PROBLEM



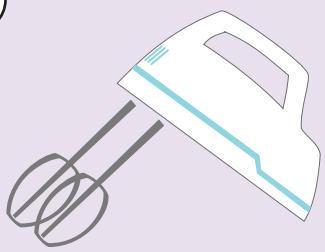
WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

SOLUTION

STORY 1

STORY 1 CONTINUED...

INGREDIENTS OF A STORY 2



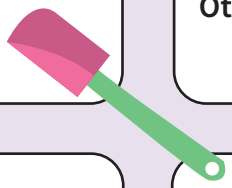
Think about your story and fill in each element below.

Working Title:

SETTING

Place(s):

Time(s):



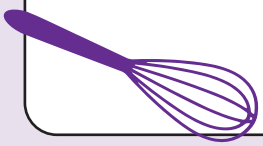
CHARACTERS

Protagonist:

Antagonist:

Others:

PROBLEM



WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

SOLUTION

STORY 2

STORY 2 CONTINUED...

NOTES

3.3 From Prophethood to Imāmah

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand why Divine Guides are needed after the Prophet (ṣ)
- Learn about the events during the end of the Prophet's life and following his death
- Discover the role Imams play in understanding and following the religion

STORY RECAP:

Ibrahim had awoken in a garden, found his purpose and gotten advice from an old man named Uncle Saduq on how to get past the glass walls. He had just had a discussion with the man on divinely appointed Prophets, yet he was still curious about the Prophets.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 9

CONTINUING THE MESSAGE

"Ibrahim, now do you see why these men are divinely chosen men?" Saduq asked.

"Yes I think I do, Uncle Saduq. They were amazing. They always obeyed Allah (swt), gave His message to their people, and never considered themselves to be great or anything significant in front of Allah (swt). They knew that they were only servants of Allah (swt), but that is one of the things that made them so amazing! They were humans like us, so we can try to be like them, but they were also something more. They were divinely chosen leaders. Allah (swt) sent them as examples and role models for us, but Allah (swt) also strengthened them so that they could help us and deliver Allah's message to us. They only wanted to fulfill their responsibility by giving us the message and to help us and guide us towards Allah (swt). We can be like them to a certain degree, but they're also different — they're special. They had the highest levels of ṣabr, ikhlāṣ and khushūʿ. Even when people made fun of them, and even threatened to kill them, they persevered to do what Allah (swt) had asked them. Everything that they did was for the sake of Allah (swt), and in return for all that they did, they never wanted any reward from people. And they never gave up hope in Allah (swt).

Their relationship with Allah (swt) was what made them such beautiful role models for us!I want to be like them! I want to improve my relationship with Allah (swt) and become as close to Him as I can by following in the footsteps of the Prophets."

Ibrahim had learned so much about these divine leaders. The next step was trying to become more like them, doing whatever they had done. If he did that, then maybe he could become closer to Allah (swt) as well. He knew he could never completely be like a Prophet, but maybe he could be a little like them.

Saduq smiled. Ibrahim had passed another test.

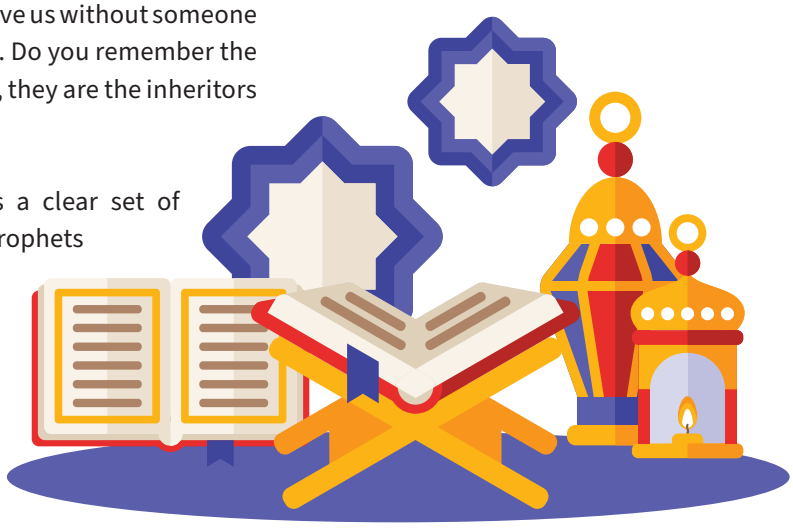
Saduq and Ibrahim had talked for hours, but Ibrahim was thirsty for more knowledge. He'd just learned about the beautiful qualities of the divinely chosen guides - the Prophets - that had been sent by Allah (swt) to guide all humans — including Ibrahim. He was so grateful and thankful that Allah (swt) had done this special favor for him and everyone… but he couldn't shake off a sad feeling. The Prophets had died long before Ibrahim or even Uncle Saduq were born. What about everyone living in the world now? Didn't they need a divine guide during their lives? He knew that the stories of the Prophets were important and in some way, their message had reached Ibrahim and Saduq. At the same time though, how could it just have ended? Didn't humans always need a leader to guide them?

"Ibrahim, why have you gone so quiet all of a sudden?" Saduq looked at Ibrahim curiously.

"The thing is, Uncle Saduq, what about us? The Prophets died long before we were born, and now we don't have a leader. I'm so thankful that we have their messages and the Qurʾān, but don't we need a leader to still explain things to us? I feel like we're missing something important. There has to be something else. Why don't we have divine guides like the Prophets anymore?"

Allah would never leave us without someone to explain things to us — He is too merciful and kind to do that.

Saduq smiled. "I think you're forgetting something, Ibrahim. We do have divinely chosen leaders after the Prophet (ṣ)! Allah (swt) would never leave us without someone to explain things to us — He is too merciful and kind to do that. Do you remember the Imāms? Let me tell you a little more about them because really, they are the inheritors of the Prophets and continued their message."



In order to become closer to Allah (swt), He has given us a clear set of guidelines, which is Islam, the best religion. He has also sent Prophets to communicate these guidelines and explain them. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) was the final Prophet, and he completed the religion of Islam- the religion that all Prophets before him had taught to some degree. However, what happens after the Prophets? Don't we need divine guides after the Prophets? Who will be our role models after Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) now that he is not alive and with us?

Activity 3.3a: Recap and Rediscover

Up until this point we have learned:

1. There must be a God/Creator.
2. There can only be one God.
3. There must be a religion from that God.
4. Islam is the perfect religion.
5. We need divine guides (Prophets) to help us follow Islam.

In order to prepare ourselves for a discussion on Imāmah and to ensure we have understood the logic behind our religion so far, we will pause here to prove each link in this chain of logic. You will be divided into 5 groups and assigned one link in the logic above to prove. Using simple language and well thought out examples, explain your point (i.e. prove that there can only be One God). Use the space below to help structure your proof and presentation. Remember - your presentation should be engaging and can be completed using any format (i.e. skit, infomercial, teacher/student, drawing pictures on the whiteboard, etc.)

We have to explain that:

_____

Format/Roles:

Arguments/Points:

THE SHARĪʿAH IS COMPLETE

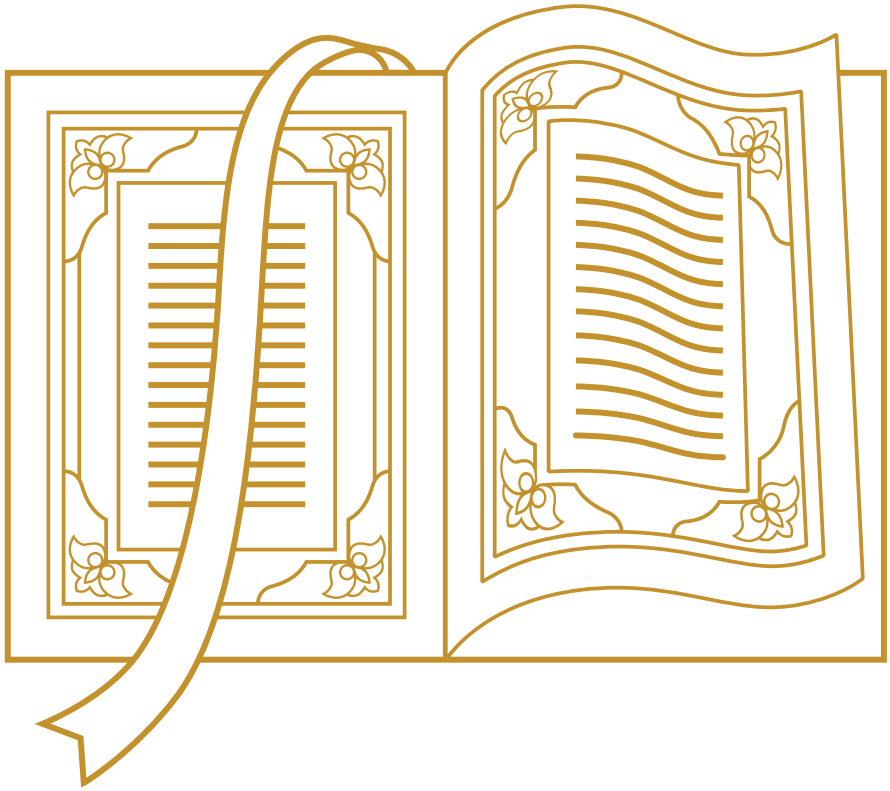
As we previously discussed, when Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) brought Islam, this sharīʿah (set of laws and guidelines) was the completion of delivery of the message of Islam to us as humans. When we discussed Islam as the best and most complete religion, we learned how Islam is a complete system of life and has told us everything that we need to become closer to Allah (swt). There is a famous ḥadīth that discusses this and says that,

> "The ḥalāl of Muḥammad will be ḥalāl until the Day of Judgment, and the ḥarām of Muḥammad will be ḥarām until the Day of Judgment."[1]

What this means is that we will never need a new religion or a new set of instructions and guidelines — Islam is the best and most complete.

However, even though we have the complete religion, we still need a person who is the closest to Allah (swt) and can provide an explanation for the laws. We also need role models to help show us the way. So, even though we don't have new laws after the death of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), we still have divinely chosen leaders, known as the Imāms, who help us apply the laws and guidelines.

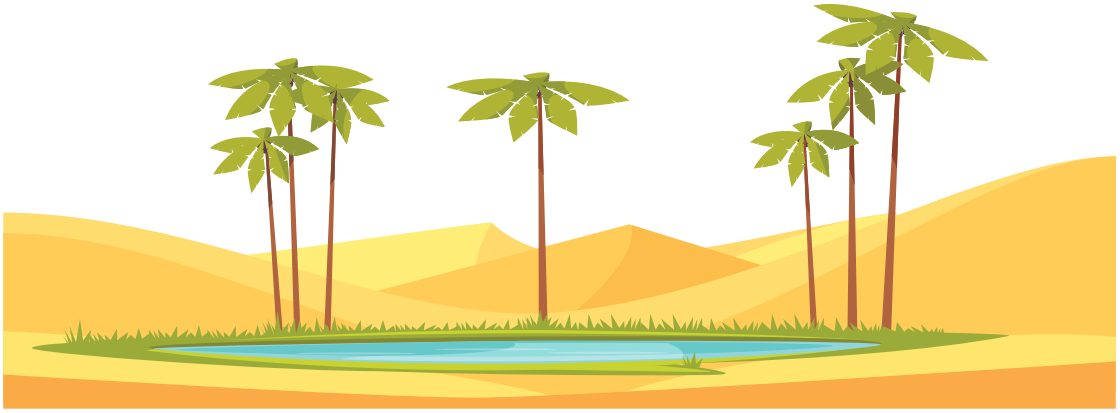
THINK ALOUD: Are there laws in western society that are applied differently depending on circumstance? Who is responsible in western society for communicating and defining the application of different laws?



1 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 1, P. 58

Extension Activity

Work with a partner to brainstorm a specific law in the constitution that remained constant throughout history but was applied in different ways based on circumstances. Then try to think of an Islamic law that affected people differently in different scenarios. What resources do we use to understand how to apply Islamic laws when issues arise on a daily basis? Create a flowchart to show how the resources we turn to today link back to the Prophet (ṣ) and Allah (swt).



AFTER THE PROPHET (ṣ)

After Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) passed away, the Muslims split over who they wanted to lead the Muslim community. Throughout the Prophet's (ṣ) life, he was extremely close to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and even raised him in his home when he was a young child. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first Muslim and person to believe in the Prophet's message, even though he was a young man at the time. The Prophet (ṣ) would teach him everything that was revealed to him from Allah, and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) learned the complete religion of Islam and the entire interpretation of the Qurʾān directly from the Prophet (ṣ). Near the end of the Prophet's life, he gathered all of the Muslims near a place called Ghadīr Khumm and told them that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was their leader and master and that when he passed away, the Muslim ummah had to hold onto two things: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). He raised Imām ʿAlī's (ʿa) hand in the sky, and on that day, many Muslims gave their allegiance to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and congratulated him on the status that he had earned. This wasn't the only time that the Prophet (ṣ) made it clear that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was meant to be the divine guide after he passed away. Imām Ali's (ʿa) job was to guide and lead the Muslims, and to explain, clarify and continue the message that had been brought.

However, when the Prophet (ṣ) passed away, the Muslims became divided, and some appointed the leader that they wanted instead of following what the Prophet had said. While the Prophet (ṣ) was being buried, a few influential individuals gathered together and decided that Abū Bakr would lead the Muslim ummah. They believed that there was no need for a divinely appointed leader and decided that they could just choose the new leader themselves. One of the reasons for this was that some of them felt like the Qurʾān and sunnah were enough of a guide, and the Muslims just needed a political leader without the same special spiritual qualifications that a Prophet had. Others acted out of jealousy, not wanting the Prophethood (Nubuwwah) and the leadership (Imāmah) to be from the same family of Banī Hāshim. Another group had special grievances against Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) because he had fought and at times killed their relatives who were enemies of Islam in previous battles. Some were also not able to tolerate the strict justice and fairness of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), who never compromised on the truth.

This group of Muslims later on came to be known as the Sunnīs. The majority of Muslims were pressured into paying allegiance to Abū Bakr and he became the "Khalīfah", the political leader of the Muslims. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) informed everyone that what they were doing was incorrect and not what Allah wanted, but very few people supported them. Unfortunately most people decided not to fight for this divine command. When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) saw that people did not want to follow him, he did not force them, even though they were wrong. He did not want the Muslim ummah to become vulnerable because of disunity. Therefore, he and the other Imāms continued to guide the Muslims even though they were not acknowledged and obeyed as the political leaders. They did this by being exemplary role models and educating the Muslim community with the correct teachings of Islam.

Even though they did not have the political power that Allah (swt) wanted them to have and had appointed for them, the Imāms always helped the Muslim ummah and guided them.

We always need a role model and a leader who has the highest of spiritual qualifications so that they can guide and lead us to becoming as close as we can to Allah (swt), and to help us practice all of the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, we always need that connection and access to divine knowledge. The Imāms are that connection to Prophethood and all of the knowledge necessary for our guidance. This is the role of Imāmah.

THINK ALOUD: Why would having an elected political leader serve as a guide for religious issues be insufficient or problematic?

THE DIVINE GUIDES

The group of Muslims that believed divine leaders had been appointed even after Prophethood was completed, is us — the Shīʿāh! Allah (swt) has appointed the system of Imāmah after Prophethood, and we have twelve Imāms as our divine leaders, beginning with Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). These 12 divine leaders hold the highest rank amongst the divine leaders — Imāmah. They are not Prophets, but they have also been specially chosen by Allah (swt) and given the tools of ʿismah and special knowledge. While they do not directly receive revelation (waḥy), they have access to the knowledge that the Prophets (ṣ) had and they receive inspiration (ilhām) from Allah (swt). While the Imāms do not bring any new laws from Allah (swt), they teach, implement, and guide us to follow the perfect religion brought by Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

As we mentioned earlier, the Prophet (ṣ) himself told us about the important role of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). He said this on many occassions, including in Ghadīr Khumm where he introduced Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) as the leader of the Muslim Ummah after him.

> The Prophet (ṣ) said: "I am leaving behind among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my family, My Ahl al-Bayt. The All-Aware, Subtle in Knowledge (Lord) has informed me that they will not separate until they return to me at the Pond (in Paradise)." Then he took the hand of (Imām) ʿAlī (ʿa) and said: "Whoever I am his mawlā (leader) then ʿAlī is his mawlā (leader)."[2]

Here the Prophet (ṣ) explains that he was leaving behind two very weighty (i.e. valuable) resources: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), and that these two would jointly guide the Muslim ummah until the Day of Judgment. He then said that whoever follows these two resources will always remain on the right path! This ḥadīth has been recorded in both Sunnī and Shīʿah books.

After the Prophet (ṣ) gave this sermon, Allah (swt) revealed one of the final āyāt of the Qurʾān and said that it was on that day that He had "perfected your religion for you" and that He had "completed [His] blessing" on us and "approved Islam as [our] religion."[3]

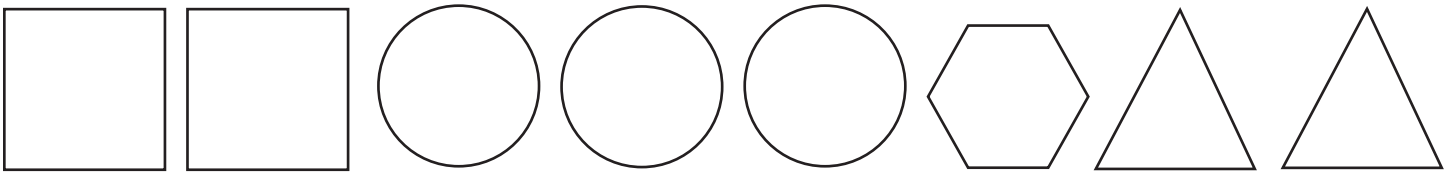
From this event, the Prophet's (ʿa) words and the revelation of this āyah, we can see that Imāmah is a very important part of Islam. In fact, it is so important that Islam was complete only after Allah (swt) introduced the concept of Imāmah.

2 *Tarikh Al-Ya'qubi,* V. 2, P. 1 & *Al-Kāfī,* V. 2, P. 27

3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

Activity 3.3b: Taking Perspectives

In the space below create an image/drawing using two triangles, two squares, three circles, and one hexagon. After you complete your drawing, share it with at least two people.



Activity 3.3b: Continued

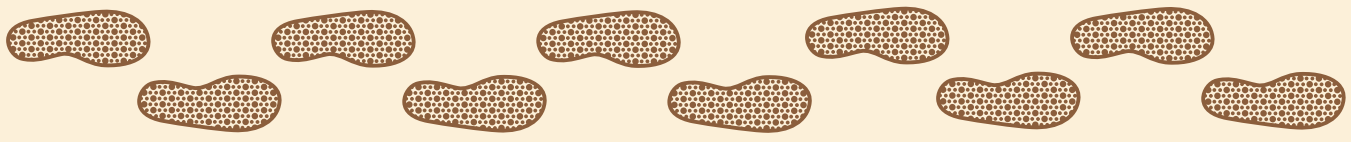
How is it that despite having the same base instructions, each drawing is different? What does this tell us about guidance? If the shapes in the instruction represent prophethood and the Qurʾān, what was missing to ensure everyone had the same successful outcome? How does Allah (swt) ensure that Muslims are all aware of not only the basics of religion but how to apply them to ensure success in this world and the hereafter?

KEY POINTS

- Islam is complete and the Prophet (ṣ) revealed the final religion in which the ḥarām and ḥalāl will last until the Day of Judgment.
- Even though the religion has not changed and will not change, we still need a divine guide who can help explain the religion to us, guide us, and be our role model.
- This need is fulfilled through Imāmah, the 12 divine Imāms, who are the inheritors of the Prophets.
- Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), as ordered by Allah (swt), appointed Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) as our leader before he passed away, but after he died, many Muslims thought they could appoint their own leader.
- The Imāms (ʿa) have access to divine knowledge.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that divine guides play a significant role in helping us become closer to Allah (swt). Without these divine guides, we would not have continued guidance on how to make good choices and follow Allah's commands completely. After the Prophet (ṣ) revealed the final religion of Islam, the Imāms (ʿa) are our divinely chosen leaders who continue to explain the divine message and divine religion. They teach us about Islam and help us to remain steady on the right path. They also serve as role models and help guide and teach us to become as spiritually close to Allah (swt) as we can be. Following in their footsteps is following in the footsteps of the Prophet (ṣ) towards Allah (swt).



Homework Activity 3.3c

Answer the following questions.

1. The following verse was revealed on the Day of Ghadīr. What does it tell us about Imāmah?

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمَ دِينًا

Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.[4]

2. Shīʿas and Sunnīs have different beliefs about Imāmah. What is the difference and why do the Shīʿas believe in the necessity of Imāmah?

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

3. What happened after the Prophet (ṣ) died? What did Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) do and why didn't he take his right of becoming the khalīfah?

4. Why do we need Imāms after the Prophets?

5. What is the difference between a divinely-appointed leader and a leader that we choose?

6. If Imāmah is a requirement of religion and plays such a big role in our belief, how can we still use this resource and remain connected to the Imām during his occultation?

3.4 ʿIsmah

OBJECTIVES:

- Explore the different types of ʿiṣmah
- Understand why Divine Guides need to be maʿṣūm
- Discover the characteristics and mindsets the lead up to ʿiṣmah

STORY RECAP:

Ibrahim, after waking up in a garden and solving puzzles with his intellect and innate nature, meets an old man named Saduq. Saduq tells him about the importance and necessity of a divine leader, and begins to describe the qualities of divine leaders to him. After thinking about these attributes for a while, Ibrahim has more questions.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 10: OUR PERFECT GUIDES

Ibrahim and Saduq sat down on the grass to rest for a little while. Ibrahim exhaled a sigh of relief. With Saduq at his side, showing him the way to the divinely chosen guides and telling Ibrahim about their teachings, he knew that he would reach the other side of the glass walls soon, and that his thirst would soon be quenched. Ibrahim was so grateful for the mercy that Allah (swt) had shown him throughout this entire journey, especially by telling him about the divinely chosen guides. He thought about all of the things that Saduq had told him, especially about the qualities and characteristics of the Prophets and their beautiful relationship with Allah (swt). All of a sudden, a question appeared in Ibrahim's mind. It made him uncomfortable, and he was itching to ask it.

"Uncle Saduq, can I ask you a question? I know that the Prophets are our role models, but didn't they make mistakes, too? Like Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Prophet Yūnus (ʿa), they both disobeyed Allah (swt) and were then punished, right? Does that mean our role models don't have to be perfect after all?"

Saduq smiled. He had the same question when he was Ibrahim's age, and it had bothered him for a long time.

"That's a great question Ibrahim! You've probably heard that the Prophets and the Imāms are maʿṣūm, which means they have the quality of ʿiṣmah, and that they do not sin or break the laws of Allah (swt). This is definitely true. But what about the stories we've heard where these same Prophets didn't do what Allah (swt) wanted them to do? It'll take time for us to talk through the answer. I want you to think about this in a different way.

Imagine that you are the best basketball player on your team at school. Everyday, your teacher gives you extra lessons after school to help you become even better. But then, when you're at a game, instead of using the special skills that he taught you, you

decide to do something else. It's not against the rules of the game, and you're still the best basketball player on the team, but you've chosen to do something that wasn't the best option.

Think about this like ʿiṣmah. The Prophets are at the highest spiritual status, and they're the best— there is no doubt about it. Allah (swt) knows that they were going to be like this from even before the time they were born because He is Al-ʿAlīm, the All-Knowing. Therefore, he granted them a special type of gift called ʿiṣmah, which is a type of protection, almost like an extra type of training. With this, the divine guides can see the reality of this world very clearly. They see how dirty sins are, so they're not even tempted to sin! They also have more responsibilities because of their status, and Allah (swt) expects the best from them — better than anybody else. But sometimes, even when they're the best player on the team, they don't choose the best option that Allah (swt) would have wanted them to. And that's the type of mistake that Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Prophet Yūnus (ʿa) made. It wasn't really a sin though, was it? Think about it. Prophet Yūnus (ʿa) just left the town he was in. Is that a sin? Did he break any of Allah's laws?"

Activity 3.4a: Figuratively Speaking

Uncle Saduq used the metaphor of a basketball player above to explain the actions of prophets such as Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Prophet Yūnus (ʿa). How does this metaphor parallel the prophets' actions? For each of the metaphorical phrases below, identify what Uncle Saduq is saying about either Prophet Ādam (ʿa) or Prophet Yūnus (ʿa) and what each portion of the metaphor is really discussing.

METAPHOR	PROPHET
"Best basketball player"	
"Special skills"	
"Rules of the game"	
"Chosen to do something that wasn't the best option"	

Ibrahim smiled. “You’re right! Now that I think about it, he didn’t sin. So he’s still maʿṣūm? The Prophets just have a higher standard because they’re already better than everyone else spiritually and Allah (swt) has given them extra training, so He expects the best from them.”

“That’s exactly right, Ibrahim! In Arabic, this is called tark al-awlā, which means that they didn’t choose the best of two permissible options. However, they didn’t sin, so this doesn’t affect the fact that they are still maʿṣūm. It’s really important for our role models and divine guides to be maʿṣūm. Why do you think this is?”

THINK ALOUD: Wait right here - it’s time to stop reading! Think about Uncle Saduq’s question to Ibrahim and work with a partner to try to answer why it is important that our role models and divine guides are maʿṣūm. What would be the drawback of having leaders who are not maʿṣūm? How would this impact our relationship with them and their guidance?

Ibrahim paused and thought deeply. If they sinned and their judgment was incorrect, then nobody could trust them and follow them. If they lied about God’s message, then everybody would be misguided! And Allah (swt) had told everybody in the world, including Ibrahim, to become like the Prophets and divine guides. Why would Allah (swt) command humans not to sin, and then order them to follow people who sinned? It just does not make any sense for Allah (swt) to tell them to become like anybody who was not maʿṣūm! Uncle Saduq was right, Ibrahim concluded. The Prophets and divinely chosen guides were sinless and perfect, but sometimes they didn’t choose the best option. That was totally different from sinning. Uncle Saduq explained to Ibrahim that while some of the prophets had sometimes not chosen the best option, the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt always chose the best possible option and did not even do tark al-awla.

THINK ALOUD: Read the verse of Qurʾān below which discusses the Prophet (s). How does this verse show the importance of ʿiṣmah in a Divine Guide? Why would this verse be revealed - what do you think is being communicated to the Muslims here?

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ ﴿٣﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴿٤﴾

“Nor does he speak from his own whim. It is only a revelation sent down to him.”[1]

Ibrahim’s thoughts wandered, and soon, another question came to his mind.

“Uncle Saduq, can we ever become perfect and maʿṣūm like the divinely chosen guides?

Saduq smiled. Ibrahim was going to break his glass walls in no time!

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Najm, 53:3-4

"You can, Ibrahim, but it's not easy. We can become partly maʿṣūm. There are certain sins that we have become experts at avoiding, so in a certain way, we are maʿṣūm for those specific sins. Think of something that really grosses you out, like drinking blood. Would you even think about doing such a thing? Of course not! Drinking blood is also a sin, so in a way, you are kind of maʿṣūm when it comes to the sin of drinking blood. Sometimes, we have a certain level or degree of iṣmah for specific sins that we have become really great at avoiding. In fact, there are some scholars and other people who have worked on themselves so much that they no longer sin either. That's why we say that the divine guides are our role models. We can become like them, just not exactly like them!"

RAPID REFLECTION 3:4A: Take a moment, independently, to think of any sins that you would never commit which you are maʿṣūm for. Then take a moment to write a list of two sins that you commit intentionally or unintentionally (i.e. praying fajr late, arrogance, etc.) and brainstorm ways to strive for ʿiṣmah with regards to these sins.

All this made sense to Ibrahim, and he was excited to follow in the footsteps of the maʿṣūmīn. Ibrahim and Saduq smiled as they walked through the garden and Ibrahim broke more of his glass walls. Everything was serene, until all of a sudden, the sound of a large siren filled the garden, and everything went pitch black.

The divine guides are our connection to Allah (swt). They communicate messages from Allah (swt) and are also role models who show us how to live our lives in the best way. Furthermore, they explain our religion in detail to us and help us understand it properly so that we know how to get closer to Allah (swt). By knowing what we should do, we can make good choices with Godly intentions, and reach perfection by becoming as close as we can to Allah (swt). In the previous lesson, we learned that we have two main types of divinely chosen guides: Prophets and Imāms. They have certain tools and qualities given to them by Allah (swt) that qualify them to be our leaders. One of these tools is **ʿiṣmah** (عصمة), which means impeccability and faultlessness. In this part of the story, Ibrahim learns a little about ʿiṣmah, and we will learn more about it, too.

WHAT IS ʿIṢMAH?

What does it mean for someone to be **maʿṣūm** (معصوم), or impeccable and faultless? In the story, Uncle Saduq explains that the divine guides are maʿṣūm and never sin or disobey Allah (swt) because they know the reality of the dirt and filth of sins. What we might be wondering, though, is how does that happen? When someone has such strong **maʿrifah** (deep understanding), it strengthens his/her īmān (faith), and this leads to **yaqīn** (complete certainty). Because of this yaqīn, this person's soul is so strong that he or she does not go towards sin. In fact, they don't even think about sins!

As a result of their strong īmān, maʿrifah, and yaqīn, the divine guides truly understand the ugliness of sins, and because of that, they want nothing to do with them and will always stay far away from them.

One day, a man came to Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) and asked, "Why don't the Maʿṣūmīn commit sins like other regular human beings?"

The Imām (ʿa) pointed to garbage nearby and replied, "Would you ever eat from that pile of garbage?" The man answered, "No, of course not!" The Imām (ʿa) then told him, "Just like you would never even think about eating from that garbage because you find it so disgusting, we the Ahl al-Bayt are so disgusted by sins that we would never even think about committing a mistake." What this means is that the divine guides see the true reality and awfulness of sins, so the idea of going near them is too disgusting to even think of.

In this lesson, we have translated ʿiṣmah as sinlessness. Others have translated it as inerrancy, impeccability, faultlessness or infallibility. They are all referring to the same thing, which is the Arabic word ʿiṣmah.

RAPID REFLECTION 3.4B: Revisit your list from RAPID REFLECTION 3.4A. Now that we know that the first step to ʿiṣmah is maʿrifah, how might you alter your plan of action for your list of 2 sins? Think of a few sources which you can turn to in order to gain maʿrifah about the harms of the sins on your list to help you understand why it is important to avoid committing them.

WHY MUST OUR DIVINE GUIDES BE MAʿṢŪM?

Story Connection:

In the story, Ibrahim thinks a little bit about why it's important to be maʿṣūm. We know that Allah (swt), in His infinite Wisdom, decided that the divinely chosen guides would be a bridge and connection between us and Him. These divine guides need to be able to truly guide and connect us to Allah (swt), and to give us Allah's true message. In order to do this, they can't commit any sins or make mistakes.

Think about it — how can we follow someone if they are making mistakes and sinning and disobeying Allah (swt)? That would mean that we could never be sure that this is Allah's true message and we would never be sure what Allah (swt) really wanted from us. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) has told us to obey the divinely chosen guides completely.

He says, "Obey Allah and the Prophet and those who have been given authority [the Imāms]."[2] In other places in the Qurʾān where Allah (swt) tells us about obedience to others, He makes sure to put a condition on it. For example, with regards to our parents, He tells us to obey them, but not when they tell us to do something wrong.[3] With the divinely chosen guides, however, the obedience doesn't have any conditions, which means we should always obey them, which means that they must be maʿṣūm!

There is no room for error, since we only have one life and a limited amount of time to reach our purpose. Allah (swt) has told us who to follow and strengthened them with a special type of ʿiṣmah so that they are completely sinless and we can follow them. Simply put, because we are human beings who are prone to committing sins, we need someone who faces the same temptations as us but does not commit sins to guide us and teach us how to reach perfection.

ʿIṢMAH AND US

We know that the divine guides are our role models, but also that they're special because they're maʿṣūm. A question that we might have is, is it possible for us to reach ʿIṣmah as well? The good news is that yes, we all can reach a certain level of ʿIṣmah. However, there are actually two types of ʿIṣmah: general (ʿāmmah) and specific (khāṣṣah). General ʿiṣmah is something that all of us can reach, whereas special ʿiṣmah is exclusive for the divinely chosen guides as a special type of training that Allah (swt) has granted them.

AL-ʿIṢMAH AL-ʿĀMMAH (GENERAL)

This is a general kind of ʿiṣmah that is accessible to everyone. If we protect ourselves from certain sins and have repented for our former sins and Allah (swt) has forgiven us, we can also become a type of "maʿṣūm." For example, you might have perfected yourself in staying away from one sin like drinking alcohol. So, you could say you are maʿṣūm when it comes to that specific sin, because you have truly understood why you should stay away from it and you might not even find it tempting. But usually, we're not like this with all sins, and our level of ʿiṣmah is limited.

AL-ʿIṢMAH AL-KHĀṢṢAH

This is a special and specific kind of ʿiṣmah and sinlessness or perfection that is found in all Prophets and Imāms. It's that special training that has been granted by Allah (swt) to these individuals. Since Allah (swt) is Al-ʿAlīm, the All-Knowing, before they were born, He knew that the divinely chosen guides would never sin or go against His commands. And so, he strengthened them from the start with special tools so that they could see the reality of the sins and never be tempted towards them. This is a special type of ʿiṣmah that is required for them to be able to successfully guide us, and so that we can fully trust them with all of our hearts. Sometimes, with their higher status, some of the Prophets might have chosen the second best option, and not the best. This is called tark al-awlā: when the Prophets did not sin, but chose the less perfect of two options. They're held to a higher standard.

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Nisāʾ, 4:59

3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Luqmān, 31:15

KEY POINTS

- ʿ**Iṣmah** (عصمة) means impeccability and is a special tool that the divine guides have; they are **maʿṣūm** (معصوم), which means that they are impeccable, never sin, and are faultless and perfect.
- In order for us to follow someone completely, they need to be maʿṣūm so that we don't make errors too.
- With hard work, we can become maʿṣūm in certain areas and protect ourselves from sins.

CONCLUSION

As we can see, ʿiṣmah plays an important role in why we can follow and obey the divine guides. We can trust whatever it is that they say and know that we will be okay: Allah (swt) has strengthened and helped them. Even though we can't become as high as the divine guides, there is still a certain level of ʿiṣmah that is available to us and that we can work towards. We should strive on this path of Allah (swt) by doing what is wājib, staying away from what is ḥarām, and always trying to do our responsibility towards Allah (swt).

Activity 3.4b: Review Questions

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What 3 steps lead up to an individual disliking sins to the point of achieving ʿiṣmah? Explain each step in one sentence.

2. Provide three reasons why the divine guides must be maʿṣūm based on the information in the lesson above as well as your own logic.

3. How does Uncle Saduq explain the actions of Prophets who did not do what Allah (swt) asked of them? What is the Arabic term for this explanation?

4. Identify the two types of ʿiṣmah. What type of ʿiṣmah are we capable of and how do we attain it?

5. If believers need sinless guides to follow in order to understand the religion, why didn't Allah (swt) just send down Angels to guide us?

NOTES

3.5 An Introduction to the Noble Qur'ān

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the power and purity of the Qur'ān
- Explore proofs of the authenticity of the Qur'ān
- Learn how to handle, read, and apply the Qur'ān to their lives
- Analyze different lessons taught in the Qur'ān
- Appreciate the scientific miracles of the Qur'ān

Ibrahim had awoken in a garden, found a purpose, and received some advice from a man named Uncle Saduq on how to get past the glass walls. Uncle Saduq and Ibrahim just discussed divinely chosen Prophets and Imam. He was now curious to learn more about the Qur'an - the Book that Allah had sent to us to teach us about the reality of the world we live in. This was the Book that the Prophets and Imams were sent to explain to us.

WHAT IS THE QUR'ĀN?

The Qur'ān is a book that is the actual, exact word of God. Allah (swt) revealed these words to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) through the angel Jibrā'īl. Allah (swt) would send Jibrā'īl to deliver the words of the Qur'ān to the Prophet (ṣ) gradually. This happened over the last 23 years of the Prophet's life. The Qur'ān is a book that was sent by Allah (swt) to guide us through our life. It tells us:

- The best way to live in this world
- How to gain Allah's pleasure and avoid His displeasure
- About the Hereafter and other things we cannot see or hear such as angels

THE FIRST REVELATION

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) was a Muslim and a believer in Allah throughout his life. He would often go to the cave of Ḥirā' to think and to worship Allah (swt). He used his time away from people to think about things more clearly and try to understand why people did what they did in the busy city of Mecca.

When the Prophet (ṣ) reached forty years of age, he received the first revelation. While he was in the cave of Hirā', Allah (s) sent Jibrā'īl with the first words of the Qur'ān:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created"[1]

THINK ALOUD: Why do you think this was the first verse revealed? What does it tell us about the message of I slam?

1 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-'Alaq, 96:1

Jibrāʾīl asked the Prophet (ṣ) to recite these words, and once the Prophet (ṣ) did this, Jibrāʾīl said, "You are the Messenger of Allah and I am Jibrāʾīl"[2] As the Prophet left the cave of Ḥirāʾ after this incident, he felt a deep sense of responsibility because he had been given such a great task to perform. When he arrived home, he discussed what had happened with his wife, Lady Khadījah. He was worried about how the pagans would react when he would convey the message of Allah (swt) zto them. Lady Khadījah tried to help by saying, "You are kind to your relatives, you treat your guests well, and you are not afraid of going through hardship for the sake of Truth. Allah will help you." The Prophet (ṣ) then felt very exhausted. He went to bed and asked his wife to cover him. While he was wrapped and covered in bed, he received the next revelation, asking him to begin spreading the message of Islam.[3]

2 *Al-Kharāij Wal Jawāriḥ,* V. 1, P. 83

3 *The Message,* Ayatollah Subhani, Ch. 11; *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 18, P. 95

Activity 3.5a: Recreating Revelation

The story of the Prophet (ṣ) receiving the first revelation is incredibly captivating and makes us wonder what that would feel like. In order to reflect on this experience more, you may choose one of the following activities to complete:

1. Write a 2 paragraph account of the event from the point of view of a fly on the wall in the Cave of Hirāʾ. Make sure your fly follows the Prophet (ṣ) till he sleeps!

2. Create a 10 square comic strip depicting the entire story. Be sure to portion out squares for the Prophet's time in the cave as well as his time at home. Note: of course out of respect the faces of the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) should be left blank, covered or have light!

3. Compose a 16 line poem describing the event. Be sure to portion out verses to discuss the cave as well at home. Note: the poem can follow any format with any rhyme scheme.

HOW CAN WE PROVE THE QUR'ĀN IS THE WORD OF GOD?

You might be asking yourself, how can I prove to myself or to non-Muslims that the Qur'ān really is the word of God? Here are some of the main proofs:

1. When the Qur'ān was being revealed, people accused the Prophet of making it up himself, so Allah (swt) told the Prophet to challenge them by asking if any of them could make something similar to the Qur'ān. If they could, then it was possible that the Qur'ān is the word of a human like the Prophet (ṣ). But if they couldn't, then it must be the word of God. Of course, no one could write anything similar to the Qur'ān at that time, and till now no one has been able to do such a thing.
2. The Qur'ān speaks about many topics such as justice, equality, human rights, business transactions, the power of the intellect, chastity, and the pure teachings of faith that were unknown to the societies of the world at that time and could not have been the product of human imagination.
3. Even though the Qur'ān is not a book of science, many āyahs of the Qur'ān invite us to reflect about the wonders of Allah's creation in order to learn important lessons, such the power and knowledge of Allah (swt) and the possibility of resurrection.

THE QUR'ĀN WAS REVEALED IN ARABIC

The Holy Qur'ān was revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) in Arabic. There were a number of reasons for this:

1. Arabic is a very eloquent language, and the Arabs were known for their brilliance in eloquence. The Qur'ān was revealed in this language because Allah (swt), the Exalted, wanted one of the major miracles of the Qur'ān to be its eloquence, and so He revealed it in a language known for its eloquence.
2. The people among whom Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) lived were Arabs.

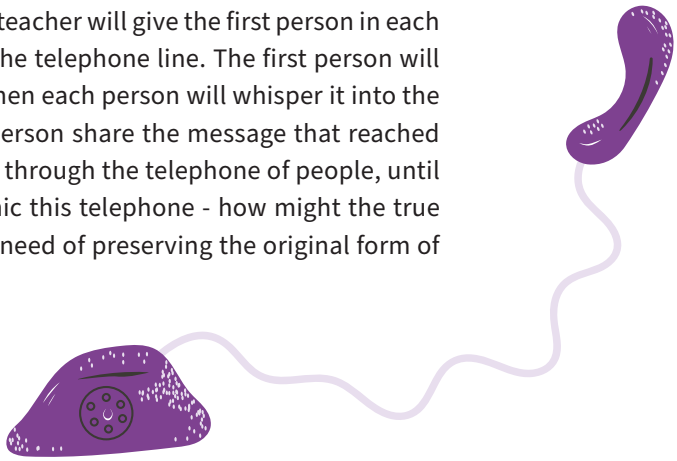
There are two important points to remember here:

1. The fact that we know the original language of the Holy Qur'ān and have access to very early copies of the Qur'ān means that we know exactly what Allah (swt) revealed to His Prophet (ṣ). Other religions do not have this knowledge, because some of them do not even know the original language in which their holy book was written.
2. The fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic does not mean it is a book only for Arabs. It is a book for all people, no matter what language they speak. However, it had to come in some language, and we already discussed the possible reasons why Allah (swt) chose Arabic.

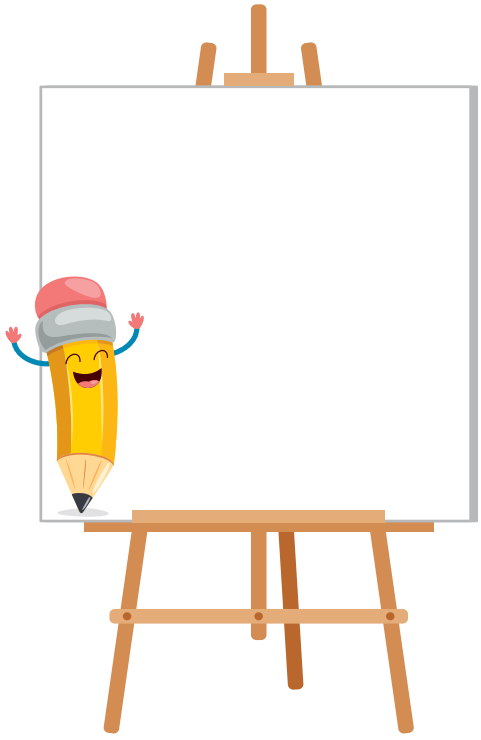
RAPID REFLECTION: If the entire religion - from the Qur'ān to ḥadīth - has been recorded in Arabic, how important is it to learn the language?

Activity 3.5b: Translation Telephone

The teacher is going to divide you into gender segregated groups of 5. Form a circle and have the youngest person in your group be the first person in the telephone line. The teacher will give the first person in each circle a phrase which is the message that must be passed along the telephone line. The first person will whisper the message into the ear of the person on their left and then each person will whisper it into the next person's ear until you reach the last person. Have the last person share the message that reached them. How accurately did the message pass from the first person, through the telephone of people, until the last person? Think about how translations of the Qur'ān mimic this telephone - how might the true meaning of the words of Allah (swt) be distorted? This shows the need of preserving the original form of the Qur'ān in Arabic.



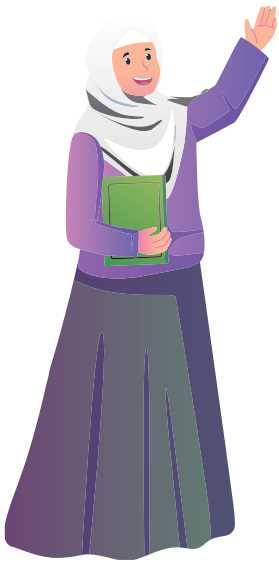
Activity 3.5c: Prophetic Pictionary



The teacher is going to divide you into groups of 3. Each group will need a piece of paper and a pencil. The teacher will provide one person from each group with a word which must be kept secret! Once the teacher says go, the person who was told the word must draw out clues on the paper to convey to their group member the word they were assigned. Each person will have one turn to be the designated person to draw. After everyone has had a turn, discuss how difficult it was to translate the teacher's word from spoken to pictorial communication. What were some of the limitations? How might translation of the Qur'an mimic pictionary - how might the true meaning of the words of Allah (swt) be distorted or altered due to language barriers? This shows the need of preserving the original form of the Qur'ān in Arabic.

THINK ALOUD: Translations of the Qur'ān are incredibly important resources and yet they differ quite a bit at times. What are the advantages of having translations readily available? What are the drawbacks to relying solely on translations to understand our religion? Do you think learning the Arabic language needs to be a bigger priority for most Muslims?

THE QUR'ĀN CONSISTS OF ĀYĀT (SIGNS)



Each segment of the words of the Qur'ān is called an 'Āyah'. The literal meaning of 'Āyah' is 'sign'. The plural of 'Āyah' is 'Āyāt' (signs). This name has been given to the segments of the Qur'ān by Allah (swt) Himself. This shows us that every single expression of the Qur'ān is a sign or miracle from Allah (swt), the Exalted.

THINK ALOUD: Why do you think each verse is called a sign?

There are two possible meanings for this:

- Each expression, because it cannot be matched by people, is a sign that these are the words of God and a sign of His Power.
- Each āyah gives us a sign or proof about Allah (swt), the message of the Prophet, the Hereafter or other important things.

THE ETIQUETTE OF HANDLING THE QUR'ĀN

In this part of the lesson, we will learn the most important rules for reading and handling the Holy Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān is the word of God, we need to show a lot of respect towards it when we are handling it or reading it. The words of the Holy Qur'ān should only be touched after performing wuḍū. This is an obligatory rule. In addition, we always begin the recitation by seeking refuge with Allah from Satan, by saying the following words:

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم

"I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan"

بِسْمِ الله الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيم

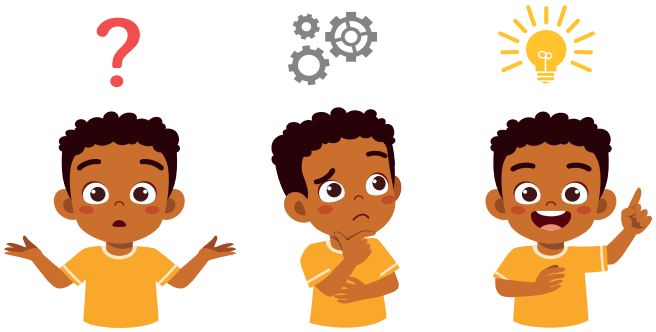
"In the name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful"

Some other things we should remember when handling the Qur'ān:

1. The Holy Qur'ān should be recited without rushing, and in a clear manner.
2. When the Qur'ān is being recited, listen attentively and do not talk or disrupt the recitation. This is especially if the Qur'āns being recited in person and not as a recording.
3. Do not leave the Holy Qur'ān open and unattended or in a place where it may be disrespected. Recite from it regularly and do not leave it unread on the shelf.
4. Worn-out pages of the Holy Qur'ān or paper with verses of the Holy Qur'ān must not be thrown in the bin. They should be maintained in such a way that they remain respected.

PUTTING THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN INTO PRACTICE

Even though we have learnt some important rules about the Qur'ān so far, the most important one that we have to remember is that the Qur'ān is not just there for us to read. It was sent to us so that we can put it into practice after reading it. So whenever we read an āyah, we should ask what it means for our life. If we really think about each āyah, we will see that each one can make such a significant change to our life.



Activity 3.5d: Quranic Lessons

There are so many opportunities for learning in the Qur'ān! Let's do a quick hunt for a lesson in the Qur'ān. In groups of three you will be assigned a short surah from the 30th juz of the Qur'ān. Read the sūrah in Arabic and English. After reading the surah, discuss at least one lesson that your group can learn from the words of Allah (swt). Fill in the chart below as you discuss. For each lesson, be sure to have verses from the surah to help explain what you wrote.

Sūrah Number: _____

Sūrah Name - Arabic: _____

_____

Sūrah Name - English: _____

_____

Summary of the Sūrah

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Evidence from the Sūrah

Evidence from the Sūrah

DHĀHIR
apparent meaning

BĀTIN
hidden meaning

Activity 3.5e: Turning to Tafsir

The ayahs of the Qurʾān have dhāhir (apparent) meanings and bātin (hidden) meanings. In the first part of this activity we explored the dhāhir meaning of each sūrah. At home read the tafsir of the short surah you were assigned to explore more in depth meanings! Bring your findings to class tomorrow for us to discuss!

THE STORY OF FUḌAYL IBN ʿAYĀN

This is a story of a man who really put the words of the Qurʾān into practice. His entire lifestyle changed because of only one āyah in the Qurʾān. Fuḍayl was a gangster. He led a gang of thieves who would threaten people, hurt them, and rob them. Fuḍayl himself was very arrogant. He would simply walk up to people and tell them that he would be coming to their house that night to rob them or hurt them. One day, he said this to one family, and the family were terrified because of this. Fuḍayl got ready to rob them and waited outside their house till night came. When it was dark, he began to jump over the fence. However, at that moment, Fuḍayl heard the neighbour reciting this āyah from the Qurʾān:

"Hasn't the time come for those who believe that their hearts should become humble to the remembrance of Allah and the Truth He has revealed?"[4]

When Fuḍayl heard this āyah, it suddenly overwhelmed him and he realized how arrogant he had been. Right at that very moment, he decided to change his entire lifestyle. He jumped back over the fence and left the house without robbing it or hurting anyone. He never robbed or hurt anyone again, and in fact he became one of the most pious people in the history of Islam.

RAPID REFLECTION: Can you remember a time when you had a moment of clarity like Fuḍayl? Have you experienced a moment which changed the way you acted or made you realize that you needed to make better decisions?

We should try to ponder the words of the Qurʾān and not simply let them pass us by. We should try to apply them to our own lives as much as possible.

THE MESSAGE OF THE QURʾĀN

As we mentioned earlier, the most important aspect of our relationship with the Qurʾān is how we apply it in our life. Let us look at some examples of important messages in the Qurʾān and examine how we apply them in our life.

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Hadīd, 57:16

Activity 3.5f: Expert Advice

Below are 3 different lessons from the Qurʾān. Your teacher will divide you into three teams. Each team will read one of the sections below. Your team must become "experts" on the lesson you are assigned! Once you have had time to read, organize your ideas, and discuss, you will be sent into a small group of three people. You must teach your group members the lesson that you studied and listen to their explanation of the lessons they studied. Don't be afraid to ask each other questions!

GOODNESS TO PARENTS

In many different parts of the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) orders us to be good to our parents. Here is one example:

Memorization Activity

فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

"(Be good to your parents)…and do not even say 'uff' to them and do not be rude to them, and speak to them respectfully"[5]

In this āyah of the Qurʾān, you can see that:

- We are not even allowed to show the slightest rudeness to our parents by saying something so small as 'uff' (which in Arabic is an expression of frustration and is equivalent to an "argh" or "ugh" in English). Imagine if a person yells at their parents, or says something hurtful to them!
- We must always speak to our parents respectfully, no matter what the situation is.

One day, a man came to Imām Sajjād (ʿa) and said that for the last few days, he had taken his mother to Ḥajj. He had carried her on his back the whole time as he went around the Kaʾbah and walked from one mountain to the other. He had fed her, clothed her and looked after all her needs. He then said to the Imām, *"Have I done my duty towards her?"* The Imām (ʿa) said:

"You have not even made up for one of the pains she felt when she was giving birth to you."

Imagine then how much we have to do to repay our parents for all they have done for us.

5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Isrāʾ, 17:23

In another story, a man heard the Imām (ʿa) saying:

> "If a good child looks at his or her parents with love, they will get the reward of an accepted Hajj." The man was very surprised by this and said, "What if I look at them with love a hundred times during the day?" The Imām (ʿa) replied, "You will get that reward each time you look at them with love."[6]

RAPID REFLECTION: How can we respect and show love to our parents daily? How often do we do these types of things?

THINK ALOUD: How does our relationship with our parents reflect our relationship with the Qur'ān and Allah (swt)?

BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD BETWEEN BELIEVERS

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'ān:

Memorization Activity

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

"Surely, the believers are brothers..."[7]

One of the themes of the Holy Qur'ān is that Muslims should treat each like brothers or sisters. Usually, we have a lot of love for our siblings. We might fight sometimes but if they are sick or in trouble we worry a lot about them. We also sacrifice things for our brother or sister when they are in a difficult situation. There is also a lot of forgiveness between brothers and sisters. Our siblings often do things that we are unhappy with or that hurt us, but we usually forgive them quickly. So the next time we are in situation where we have to make a decision on how treat a fellow Muslim, we should remember this lesson from the Qur'an.

If a fellow Muslim did something wrong to me or hurt me, I should think, "How would I react if this was my brother or sister?" If a fellow Muslim is in desperate trouble, I should think, "How would I help this person if he was my brother or sister?"

RAPID REFLECTION: Can you think of a time when a fellow Muslim treated you unkindly? How did you respond? Did you treat them like a brother/sister?

6 *Mishkatul Anwar*, Ch. "Goodness to parents"

7 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Ḥujurāt, 49:10

There is a great example in the history of Islam about brotherhood and sisterhood between the believers. The people of Mecca were oppressed in their hometown. Their homes and wealth were taken from them. They were often tortured. So they migrated to the city of Medina, along with the Prophet (saw). The people of Medina were already Muslims, and welcomed their new friends. The Meccans had nothing–they had to leave all their wealth and property behind, while the people of Medina had their homes and their businesses. The Prophet (saw) found an amazing way for the people of Medina to share what they had with the people of Mecca, while also creating stronger friendships. The Prophet paired one person from Medina with one person from Mecca and declared them to be brothers. The person from Medina would share his home and his wealth with the person from Mecca until the Meccan person managed to build himself a home and a job.

This was a great example of how believers treated each other as brothers, following the advice of the Qur'an.

USING OUR INTELLECT

The Qur'ān constantly reminds us to use our intellect or minds. The entire universe of creation with all its miracles is a lesson about Allah, but only for those who use their intellect.

MEMORIZATION ACTIVITY

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

"Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for those who have intellect."[8]

The Qur'ān wants us to think things through and make judgements based on evidence and sound reasoning, not based on what we feel like, what other people are doing, or what our friends or society at large expect us to do.

RAPID REFLECTION: What do we base our daily decisions on? Think about some of the decisions you make on a daily basis surrounding food, scheduling, school, etc. What pushes you to choose one thing over another? Was your choice driven by Islam and logic?

8 *Noble Qur'ān,* Āle 'Imrān, 3:190

One of the best examples of the Qurʾān asking people to use their intellect is the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa). Prophet Ibrāhīm's people used to worship statues that they had made themselves. Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) thought this did not make sense, so he said to them:

> "Do you worship that which you have made yourselves...when it is Allah who made you and these things that you make?"[9]

Even though his argument was logical and made sense, they did not listen to him. He tried another approach. He smashed the idols that the people of his town used to worship, and left only the biggest idol standing with an axe on its shoulder.

When the people asked him what had happened, he told the people that if the idols are really gods who communicate with their worshippers, then the big idol must have done this act and they could question the gods to find out more about it. Of course, they knew that the gods were lifeless and mute, and that Prophet Ibrāhīm was getting them to see that the big idol was incapable of doing anything - speaking, or defeating other gods. They responded: *"You know these statues do not talk!".*

So Prophet Ibrāhīm(ʿa) said:

> So you worship these things instead of Allah, when these things can't benefit you or harm you…don't you **think?**[10]

Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) tried as much as he could to get his people to think. However, they had seen their fathers and their grandfathers doing the same thing and so they did not want to change, even though they knew they were wrong. They would say to him, *"We found our fathers worshipping them!"*

Also, their desires overcame their intellect. They were used to this way of life. They made money from these statues and they set up their society around them. If they agreed with Ibrāhīm (ʿa), all that would change, so they decided to ignore what their minds told them and instead followed their desires.

THINK ALOUD: What motivated the idol worshippers to deny Prophet Ibrahim (ʿa)? What different factors pushed them to keep worshipping idols?

Don't we have similar challenges? We sometimes see our acquaintances doing certain things, and they pressure us to do the same as they do without thinking. They might encourage us to dress in a certain way, to cut our hair in a certain way, or to do dangerous or hurtful things just because they do them. When we are in a situation like this, we have to stop and *think*. We have to think about the advantages and disadvantages of what we are about to do and what could happen to us or other people.

We have to always put our mind before our desire. No matter how much we feel like buying those very expensive shoes, or teasing that kid at school, or being the class clown, we have to use our mind and see whether that desire is more important or what our mind is telling us is more important.

9 *Noble Qurʾān,* Aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37:95-96

10 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Anbiyāʾ, 21:63-67

Following our desires can lead us to have many problems in our life. Imagine always following the desire to watch TV and play video games, and ignoring our mind that tells us to study. We would end up always failing at school. Imagine always following the desire to hit someone when they make us angry and ignoring our mind which tells us to solve the problem in a different way. We would probably end up getting expelled from school and even in trouble with the law one day. We have to learn to make our mind stronger than our desires so that we can be successful in life and stay out of trouble. In any situation in life, we have to remember to weigh the advantages and the disadvantages of the two things we are choosing between by using our intellect. Then we must choose the one that is right, not the one that our desire is urging us to choose.

THE SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN

In our previous lessons, we said that the main proof that the Qur'ān is the word of God is that no one has ever been able to produce anything like it, and that it has never been changed. The Qur'ān also contains scientific miracles. The Qur'ān is not a science book, but sometimes when Allah speaks about various wonders of His creation, He does so by presenting knowledge that no one at the time of revelation had discovered about the physical universe.

One of the clearest scientific miracles of the Qur'ān is the way it describes a small baby growing inside its mother's womb. Even though at the time when the Prophet (saw) lived, people had no idea about how the baby grew inside its mother's womb, the Qur'ān gives a very detailed description of the stages of growth.

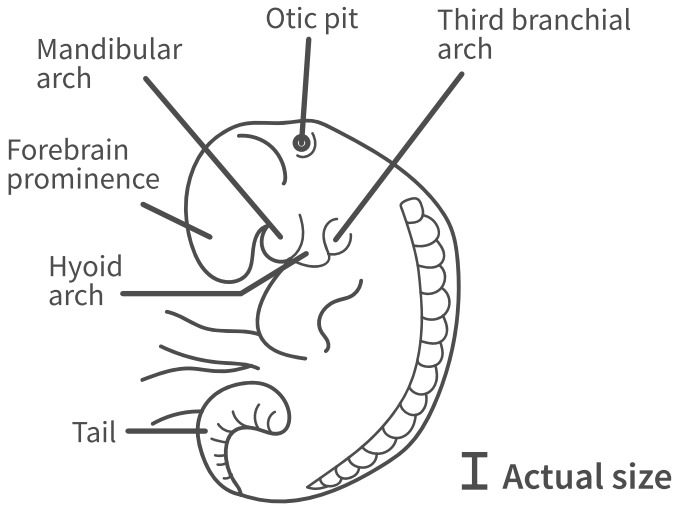
- The Qur'ān says the baby grows under 'three layers of darkness'. Scientists have confirmed that there are three layers covering the baby if we were to look from the outside: the mother's abdominal muscles, the wall of the womb, and the membrane covering the baby
- The Qur'ān says that the baby looks like a leech. Scientists have confirmed that a week after the baby is in the womb it actually does look like a leech.

A. Human Embryo

B. Leech

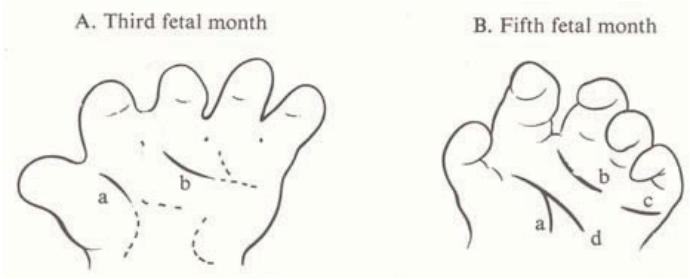
- The next stage the Qur'ān describes is that the baby looks like a chewed lump and this has also been confirmed by scientists.

A. Embryo



- Then the Qurʾān says that the baby's bones are covered by flesh and this is also true. A skeleton formed of young bone [made mainly of cartilage at 6-8 weeks] forms before recognizable muscle begins to wrap itself around this skeleton in a process called myogenesis.

Note how by just 7 weeks the young skeleton is beginning to form knee and ankle joints! [8, 9]



The hand by three months [12 weeks] with a distinct shape formed by the embryos early skeleton

Scientific miracles found in the Holy Qur'an

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypXqqdPrYQQ

> "And certainly We created humankind of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small mixed-drop (nuṭfah) in a firm resting-place, Then We made the seed a clot (or leech-like clot), then We made the clot a (chewed) lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators."[11]

- Finally, the Qurʾān says that the baby develops the ability to hear and see, and scientists have confirmed that a baby gets those senses in that exact order.

> "Indeed We created man from the drop of a mixed fluid so that We may put him to test, so We endowed with hearing and sight."[12]

11 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Nūr, 24:12-14

12 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Insān, 76:2

Homework Review 3.5g

1. Why are the expressions of the Qur'ān called āyāt? Provide two reasons.

2. The Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. This means:

   a. It is a book for Arabic people only
   b. It is a book for all people, it is only in Arabic because this was the language of the Prophet's people
   c. It is a book only for those who can learn Arabic

3. The Qur'an is the word of

4. Choose one of the lessons that we discussed from the Qur'an. How do you apply it to your daily life?

5. The Prophet was _____ years old when he received his first revelation from Allah (swt) through Angel _____ in _____. The first āyāh revealed said _____.

6. How can we prove that the Qur'ān is the word of Allah (swt)? Explain at least one proof in your own words.

7. **True/False:** I can open and touch the words of the Qur'ān without wuḍū.

8. **True/False:** Fuḍāyl ibn Ayān was a great scholar who taught tafsir of the Qur'ān.

9. The scientific miracles of the Qur'ān:
   - **a.** Are the main miracles
   - **b.** Are not the main miracles but help us prove the Qurʾān is the Word of God
   - **c.** The Qurʾān has no scientific miracles

BONUS: What is your favorite āyāh of the Qur'ān? Share it below and explain why you love it!

NOTES

CHAPTER 4

Qiyāmah

4.1 The Necessity of Qiyāmah

4.2 Allah's Mercy and Justice

4.3 The Soul

4.1 The Necessity of Qiyāmah

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize that this world is temporary and short-lived. We all know that we have a deadline coming up, which is the time of our death and the upcoming Day of Judgment.
- Understand that our Hereafter is a direct consequence or result of our actions in this world.
- Recognize that knowing about and thinking about the Hereafter is important to help us keep track of our lives.
- Explore how, without Qiyāmah, Allah's (swt) justice would be incomplete.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 11: FALLING INTO PANIC

At the sound of the loud siren, Ibrahim stopped dead in his tracks and covered his ears. Everything had gone pitch black. He didn't know what was happening! Was it all over? He looked around for Saduq, but it was so dark that he couldn't see anything! He tried to speak, but the siren was so loud that he couldn't hear the sound of his own voice. What was happening?

As the siren continued to blare, Ibrahim grew more terrified. How had time gone by so fast? Could it really all be over? He hadn't had enough time to do everything that he wanted to do. If he'd known that there was such a limited amount of time, he would have used the time that he had in the garden so much more carefully. He thought back to all of the time he had wasted doing useless things.

If only he had known it was going to end this fast, he would have done things differently! He would have paid more attention to what he was doing, instead of acting like he had all the time in the world! He remembered a time when he had received an exam in class. The teacher hadn't told them they only had ten minutes to complete it, so he had wasted all of his time on the first question. If he had only known that there was a time limit, he would have spent his time more wisely. He sighed and prayed for the siren to stop.

All of a sudden, the siren stopped ringing and everything went bright again. "Alḥamdulillāh" Ibrahim thought to himself. He looked around him, but everything seemed different somehow. Saduq was nowhere to be seen. Behind the glass walls, he now saw something odd — plants of various shapes and sizes had appeared. They were beautiful, healthy plants, some with gorgeous flowers. Seeing these plants, he was filled with hope and wanted to stay and look at them forever! On each plant, there was something that looked like a massive label or price tag. He placed his face against the glass wall and realized it wasn't a price tag — it was a deed tag! On it, the following was written:

- **Charity:** Given by Ibrahim son of Yahya
- **Date:** 8/6/2017
- **Quality:** Sincerely for the sake of Allah (swt)
- **Thawāb:** 100,192

What was really weird was that the reward tracker kept increasing with each minute. His eyes widened. This was so cool, but what was it? He glanced around the other side of the glass wall and saw a horrible looking tree. The sky around this tree was dark and gloomy, and the air was noxious. He felt despair and regret just looking at it! There were fruits hanging from the tree that were shaped like devil's heads. One of the tags on the fruits read:

- **Lying to get out of trouble:** Committed by Ibrahim son of Yahya
- **Date:** 8/2/2013.
- Never repented
- **Quality:** Done to protect himself
- **Demerits:** 100

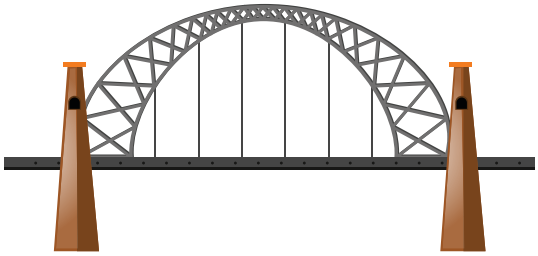
This number stayed still, neither increasing nor decreasing. It seemed as though his deeds had turned into plants on the other side of the glass walls. Was this the result of his entire life? What was going on? Was this the Day of Judgment? Ibrahim's eyes widened, and in complete shock, he tripped over a rock and fell unconscious.

In our lives, we only know a few things for certain and without a doubt. One of these things is that our lives on earth will end, and none of us will live forever. This is true for all of us, and it is a sure fact that everyone who is born will die! We all come from Allah (swt) and will return to Him.1 Wherever we might be, no matter how protected or secure, death will eventually overtake us.[2]

In the story, Ibrahim hasn't died, but all of a sudden, something terrifying happens. He hears a siren and everything goes black. This makes him reflect on his life and what he has done in terms of the tests he has been given so far. He realizes that his time was limited, and that he could have used his time better. He has a lot of questions and wonders what is happening to him. Sometimes, when we realize that our time is limited in this world, and that we are going to die, we also have a lot of questions.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:156

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Nisāʾ, 4:78



Some of us probably wonder what is going to happen when we die and what is going to happen in the next world. We might wonder: what is the connection between this world and the next world? It is normal and natural to have these questions. In fact, having these questions can help us!

This dunyā — this material world — is temporary, which is why it is important to understand that it is not our goal to get everything in this world; this world is merely a bridge to the Hereafter. Just like bridges connect two places together, this world and the Hereafter are also connected to one another!

QIYĀMAH GIVES THIS WORLD A VALID PURPOSE

We can all see that we live in a vast and expansive universe, the limits of which we still have not discovered. We can also see the incredible level of detail and precision within this universe, and how it has been designed to permit life in general, and human life in particular. It does not make sense that all this is here so that one day it would just perish and cease to exist, with no consequences or effects. Why would the Wise and Intelligent Creator, Allah (swt), create such an incredible world in vain (without a purpose or reason that comes after it)? Allah (swt) asks us to consider this question many times in the Qur'an and affirms that this world was not created in vain.

> *"...those who reflect on the creations of the skies and the Earth (thinking): "Our Nurturer, You have not created this in vain, Glory to be You so protect us from the punishment of the Fire"*[3]

Allah (swt) tells us that this incredible creation is there as a prelude to an even greater system of creation that will come after it — the eternal Hereafter. This entire universe exists and is inhabitable by us so that we can go through the tests and trials of life and earn our place in the eternal system of creation that comes in the Hereafter. If we did not believe that there would be an eternal life after this one, what true purpose would we have to struggle in this world or to improve ourselves or to do good or be moral?

This is why those people mentioned in the above āyah, once they have pondered on the incredible beauty and precision of the skies and Earth declare three things:

1. This world could not have been created in vain
2. Allah (swt) is too Great to have created a world in vain
3. The purpose of this world is for us to experience tests and trials and earn our place in an eternal life of bliss- this is why the ayah ends by these people asking Allah (swt) to protect them from the fire of Hell, which comes in the eternal afterlife

3 *Noble Qur'ān,* Āle ʿImrān, 3:191

FOCUS ACTIVITY:

1. Do you enjoy taking tests?
2. What might it be like to never take another school test again?
3. Aside from the obvious reduction in student stress, what might be some **drawbacks** to never taking tests in school?
4. Are tests a necessary part of the learning process?
5. How might we apply this understanding of academic testing to help us better understand our purpose in the dunyā?

QIYĀMAH IS NECESSARY FOR TRUE JUSTICE

When we discussed Allah's justice in previous lessons, we talked about how Allah's (swt) justice only makes sense if we remember that He has told us that there is a Hereafter, and that ultimate justice will occur when we take that world into consideration. Qiyāmah is the platform for Allah's (swt) true justice. We know that Allah (swt) is the All-Just, and His justice makes it so that everyone will be held accountable for their good and bad choices.4 We cannot attain true justice in this world, and so, there must be another world! Allah (swt) has promised this for us. He says that those who have done good and had faith will not be treated in the same way as those who have done bad. Furthermore, Allah (swt) says that He has created the world according to the truth and perfect justice, and that every person will get what they deserve.5

Similarly, Allah (swt) is al-Ḥakīm, the All-Wise. Everything he does has a reason and purpose. He created us with a purpose, which is to become as close to Him as we can through worship and obedience. In the Qurʿān, Allah (swt) asks us an obvious question: "Do you think that We have created you without a purpose and that you won't be brought back to Us?."[6] Of course we have a purpose, and of course we will be brought back to Him. However, this purpose cannot be reached in this world, only in the next.

Knowing that this world is a test where Allah (swt) is seeing how we will act, it only makes sense that He would create another world where we see true justice and the consequences of our actions. After all, this is in line with His justice! That is why we need Qiyāmah.

"Do you think that We have created you without a purpose and that you won't be brought back to Us?"[6]

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Insān, 76:3

5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Jāthiyah, 45:21-22

6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Muʿminūn, 23:115

QIYĀMAH GIVES US CONSEQUENCES

Some of us might wonder what the benefit of having Qiyāmah is. What's in it for us and how does it help us become closer to Allah (swt)?

We know that our purpose is to obey and worship Allah (swt) and to become closer to Him, reaching a high level in Jannah, which is in the next world. There is a level of closeness to Allah (swt) that we can only achieve in the next world. However, this world is a platform where we can prepare the best for our **ākhirah**, and know that we will be held accountable for whatever it is that we do. One of our tests is that we do not always see the results or consequences of our actions in this world immediately. This is a world of action, and the next world is the world of results, where we will see the full effects and results of our actions both good and bad. Allah (swt) tells us that on the Day of Qiyāmah, we will see whatever good and bad we did, even if it is as small as an atom.[7]

Sometimes, we do bad things easily when we do not see an immediate punishment. We think that nothing will happen. For example, if we are home alone and are not allowed to watch television, we might think about watching it, knowing that our parents will never find out. However, the reality is that we will eventually be held accountable — everything is recorded and has a consequence. If there are no such consequences, we do not have much motivation to do the right thing because we may feel that in this world we may still somehow get away without seeing the real or full consequences of what we do. Whereas if we believe in these consequences, we will act while knowing that we will face the full consequences of everything we do, whether it is done publicly or privately and whether it is a great deed or a small one. If people truly believed in the hereafter, they would not perform evil deeds and the world in which we live would be a much better place.

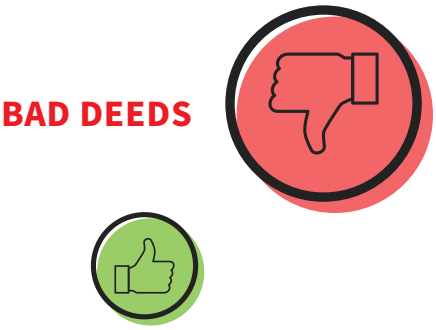
Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) tells us that today is the day of action where we're not held accountable, and tomorrow, the Day of Qiyāmah, is the day of accountability, where there is no action. In the Qurʿān, Allah (swt) tells us that on the Day of Qiyāmah, people will be begging to come back to this world to do good deeds, but they will not be allowed to. This world is like a farm where we are planting our good and bad deeds and we will see the results of those seeds in the *ākhirah.*

Think about the story of Ibrahim that we just read. He saw that on the other side of the glass wall, plants had grown from the deeds that he had committed. Whatever he had done had results that were either good or bad on the other side of the glass wall, depending on how he had done them. Similarly, whatever we do in this world will show up on the day of Qiyāmah, and the results will depend on the quality of our action!

7 *Noble Qurʾān,* Az-Zalzalah, 99:6-8

Think about school; your teacher tells you that there will be a test after a certain number of units. It is up to you whether or not you study, but knowing that there is going to be a test encourages you to pay attention and study in advance. At the time of the test, however, there is no turning back. If you study hard, you will also see the benefits: you will receive a good grade on the test. However, if you did not study, you will see the negative effects: you will likely fail the test. This analogy is kind of like the Day of Qiyāmah. Your deeds are what will count and have positive or negative effects!

FOCUS ACTIVITY: Your classroom has rules that all students must adhere to for a cohesive and functional learning environment. Imagine if a student enters the classroom and proceeds to disregard all the rules. Are they likely to be successful in the class? If another student diligently takes notes and follows all the rules that the teacher sets out for students, what is the most likely outcome for him/her?



QIYĀMAH KEEPS US ON TRACK

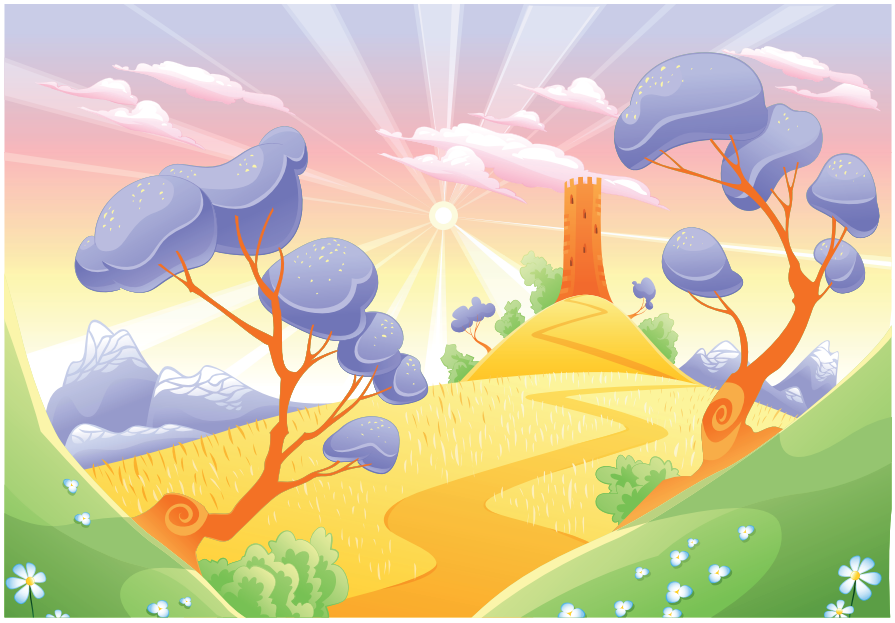
When we know that the Day of Qiyāmah will happen, we act better in this world and are encouraged to act in a certain way. When we are aware that all of our actions are being recorded and will have consequences, this helps us to remain on the path towards our purpose. When we remember death and the Day of Qiyāmah, it keeps us on track and has the following benefits:

- Stops us from focusing on meaningless things
- Keeps us away from doing bad deeds
- Pushes us to do good deeds
- Prevents us from getting attached to this world
- Helps us learn from others

Story connection:
In the story, when Ibrahim thought his life, or the world he was in, had ended, he immediately felt regret about not using his time more wisely. If he had truly understood and thought about how temporary it was, he wouldn't have wasted any time.

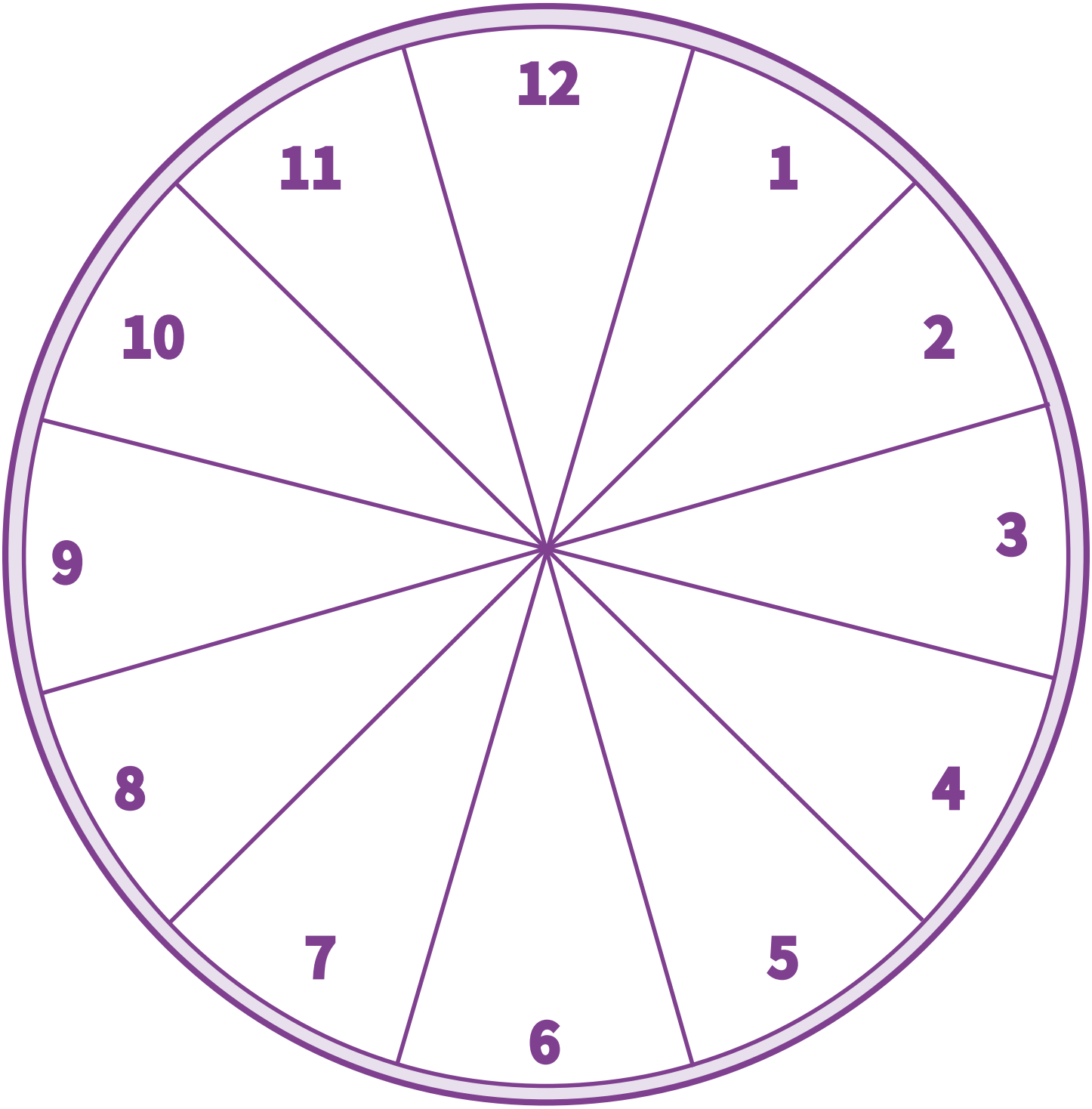
When we reflect on Qiyāmah, we are not just thinking about the day in front of us, but rather, our vision becomes long-term. Sometimes, we do this in our lives, but we only think about a few years in advance. For example, gymnasts who are training for the Olympics know that they want to win the competition taking place in several years. Before they can get to the Olympics or even qualify, they have to train for years. Every decision they make is in line with reaching this goal. They will choose their food carefully and make every decision according to how it may help them to reach their goal. Whenever they become tired or start to lose hope, remembering their goal pushes them to move forward again. By visualizing the gold medal they desire, they can make the best choices that will ultimately help them to reach their goal.

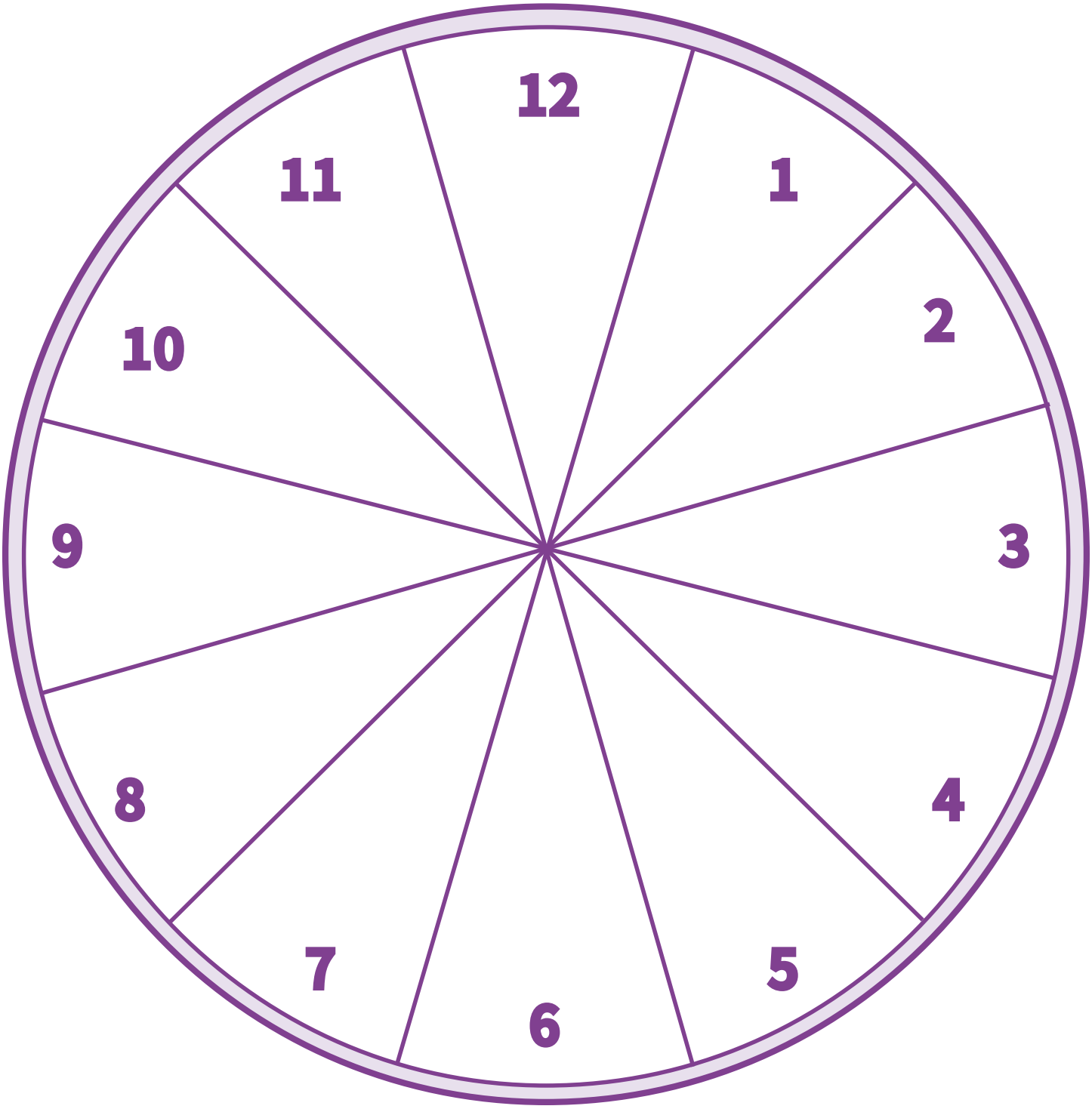
Now, imagine if we thought about things with an even longer term goal in mind, like *Jannah*! When we visualize reaching our goal, we are motivated to make good choices and keep our end in mind. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said, "Blessed is the one who remembers the Resurrection and thus does good [deeds]." It might not always be easy for us to make the right choice, but when we remember that we are living for the next world, and this is all just temporary, it makes it a little bit easier. When we realize that we will be held accountable for our choices, it helps us avoid making bad choices and performing ḥarām actions. On the Day of Judgment, every single one of our deeds will be shown to us. In fact, the earth, and all of our body parts will talk and tell Allah (swt) what it is that we did with them — whether that was good or bad. Keeping all this in perspective really keeps us on track and helps us make the best choices that are in line with pleasing Allah (swt) and becoming closer to Him.

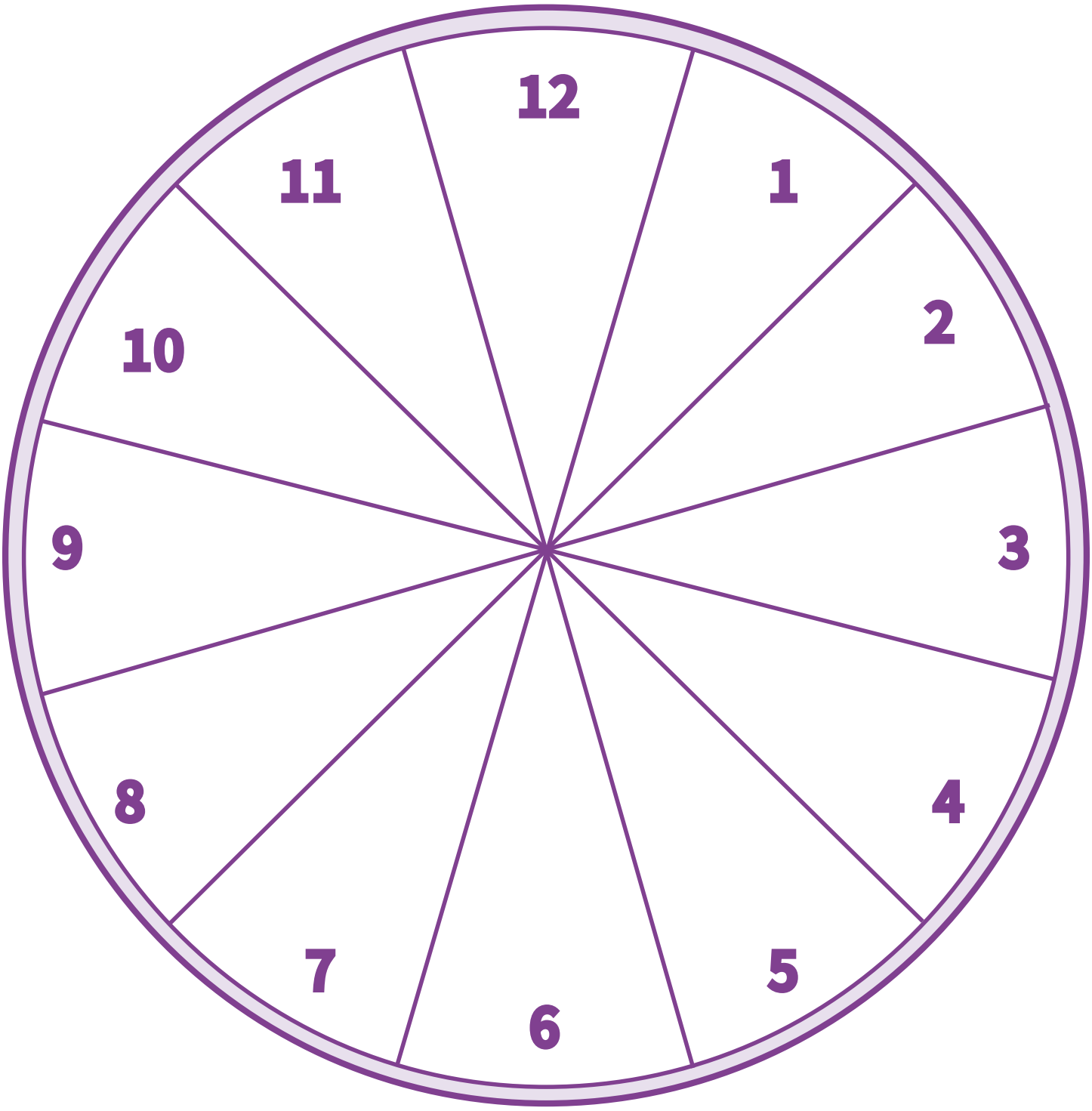


Activity 4.1a: Eliminating Time Wasters and Distractions

Using the clock graphic organizer below, identify some time wasting activities or distractions that you may engage in from time to time throughout the day. In the second clock face, brainstorm one activity per time slot that you could engage in that could earn you a reward like Ibrahim's in the Hereafter. You may start the clock at 12 pm (noon) if it helps you reflect on your waking hours.




12
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11


12
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11

Extension Activity

Draw a picture of some beautiful scenery (plants, landscapes, wildlife, buildings) that you would love to encounter in Jannah. For each item, come up with a tag/label of a good deed that might help you secure this reward. **Tip**: consider scaling each deed to the magnitude of the object in your illustration.

CONCLUSION

Death is a certainty in this life, and after death, we will all be brought back to life on the Day of Qiyāmah. On this day, we will be asked about our actions in this world and see the results. We need the Day of Qiyāmah for these consequences, to help us stay on track, and to fulfill Allah's justice. Whatever we do in this world will show up in the next as the fruits of the seeds our deeds have planted. We must take advantage of what little time we have on this earth to make good choices with Godly intentions and move closer to Allah (swt). If we truly struggle, then Allah (swt) will help us in this!

NOTES

4.2 Allah's Mercy and Justice

OBJECTIVES:

- Explore how Allah (swt) is both ar-Raḥmān and al-ʿAdl — the All-Merciful and the All-Just
- Recognize that in His justice, Allah (swt) sent the Prophets and the Imāms to steer us to the path of guidance in order to avoid hellfire
- Understand that seeking forgiveness right away from Allah (swt) and making the right choices will reduce the consequences we must face before being allowed to enter Jannah
- Examine the three types of rights that we have to honor: the rights of Allah (swt), the self, and others

Story Recap:

Ibrahim is a young boy who had been in a garden with glass walls for what felt like many days. His first objective had been to find water; along the way, he solved many puzzles and received guidance from an old, wise man named Saduq. Saduq had helped Ibrahim destroy the glass walls by improving his behaviour. In the last chapter, he hears a blazing siren and wakes up to what feels like the Day of Judgment.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM PART 12: WAKING UP

Ibrahim slowly opened his eyes, groaning in incredible pain, as even this simple task was difficult. It felt as though his body was on fire. His legs and hands were mostly numb and all he could see through his open eyes was white. He shut his eyes again, trying to remember what had happened. *What was happening to him? Where was he?*

He tried to remember the last thing that had taken place. He remembered the garden that he was stuck in, how the siren had started blaring, and how he had seen the plants behind the glass walls. Had the Day of Judgment really arrived? Was he doomed? Most of his deeds in that garden looked disgusting. He had a few good deeds, but so many bad ones! He felt tears fill his eyes. The ugly garden was the result of his own actions; those deeds were the seeds he had planted. He couldn't blame anyone but himself. The worst part was that he knew he could have been better. It would have been so easy to be good. Most of the Islamic rules were possible to follow, even if they could be a little difficult at times. Most of the rules he had broken were simply because he was lazy. If he only had a chance to go back to the world and do it right — to make all of the right choices — he would!

"O Allah," he said in his mind, "please give me the chance to do better. Please don't let it be the Day of Judgment yet. Please don't let me be dead!"

Tears filled his eyes as he began to hear odd noises. He forcefully opened his eyes to see what was happening. Much to his dismay, however, he still couldn't move. Ibrahim began to panic — he could tell that he wasn't in the garden anymore! Was he dead or alive? He tried to scream, but no sound would come out.

As he stared above his head, all he could see was a white light. It was a little blurry because he couldn't move his head. After a few seconds, something began to block the white light. His vision gradually started to clear up, and soon, hovering above him, he saw his amazing mother with an expression of incredulity and excitement on her face. He was so happy to see her! Was she another vision or proof that he was still in the land of the living?

Slowly, his mind registered the pure white light above as the ceiling and lightbulb overhead. Looking around, he soon realized he was in some kind of hospital bed. He tried to open his mouth to speak, but still no sound would come out. He was elated to see his mother, and knew that everything she had told him in the past — all of those reminders about doing what was right and listening to and obeying Allah (swt) and the Prophets and Imāms — all of that was true. He was so grateful for such a wonderful mother!

"Nurse!" His mother started calling out, raising her voice in an excited panic. "Call the doctor! Ibrahim has opened his eyes! He's coming back to us from the coma! He's going to be okay inshāʿAllah!" Rahmah's tears escaped her eyes and she began sobbing. Her baby boy was alive!

All of a sudden, a flood of memories started to rush back to Ibrahim. He had been playing soccer with some friends when, out of nowhere, a car came speeding around the corner, driving straight into Ibrahim. He remembered his entire body hitting the windshield with incredible force.

Ibrahim gravely recognized that he should have died in a car accident of that magnitude. The car had hit him directly! But here he was, lying in a hospital bed, alive! After the accident, the only thing Ibrahim could remember was the garden with glass walls and the wonderful things that Saduq had taught him. Was that really a dream? It couldn't have been! He had learned so much and everything Saduq told him, he just knew that all of it was true. He couldn't have dreamt up the amazing arguments he had learned from Saduq.

Ibrahim snapped back to reality. Several nurses rushed into the room and prepared him for the doctor's arrival. They checked his pulse, put a light in his eye to check his vision, and started to poke and prod him, asking him if he felt anything and requesting that he blink to signal he could hear them. He tried to communicate with them the best that he could, by blinking.

"*O Allah, please give me back the feeling in my legs and arms. I promise to use them in a good way and to become a better Muslim!*" he prayed. In no time, Ibrahim felt a fuzzy, tingling sensation begin in his legs and arms, and, soon after that, he was able to speak. "Alḥamdulillah!" Ibrahim finally managed to say. Allah (swt) had listened to his prayer! His mother, Rahmah, was still crying, but she couldn't stop hugging and kissing Ibrahim at the same time.

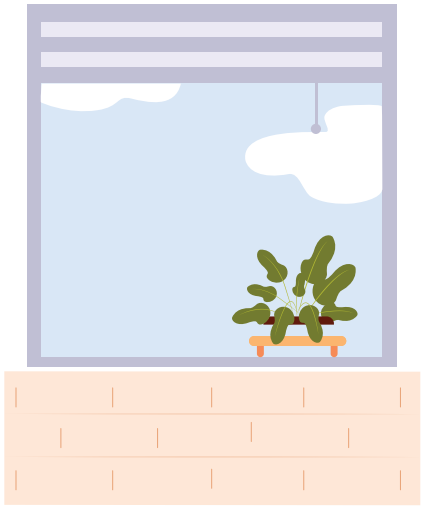
"Mom, what happened?!" His mother looked at him with tears glistening in her eyes.

"Ibrahim, after the terrible accident, you've been in a coma! We have been praying so hard for your miraculous recovery, and reciting Ziyārat ʿAshūrāʿ and Qurʾān every day. Alḥamdulillāh, we were lucky enough to find an amazing doctor who is Muslim, too! Everyday, he would come talk to you, telling you all about life. I can't wait for you to meet your doctor, Ibrahim! You're going to love him! Oh, here he is now!"

The doctor walked in and introduced himself, “Salāmun ʿalaykum, Ibrahim. My name is Saduq!”

Ibrahim couldn’t believe his eyes — it was Uncle Saduq! Did he remember everything that had happened in the garden? Was Saduq there with him? Saduq began a conversation with the nurses and his mother about the different medications that Ibrahim would have to take now that he had recovered. Ibrahim quickly zoned out, still overwhelmed by all of the new revelations. How was Saduq his doctor? He looked around the room curiously, desperate to find some evidence of the garden.

There, lying on the window sill, Ibrahim noticed an odd-looking plant with a deed tag. It was the same deed tag that Ibrahim remembered from the garden. His eyes widened. So, the garden was real?! He looked at Saduq, and then back to the plants, and then back at Saduq, trying to figure out what had happened. He continued looking for some kind of clue, any clue.



Ibrahim finally caught Saduq’s gaze. As though Saduq knew exactly what Ibrahim was thinking, the older man slowly grinned, and his smile sparkled. Then, looking right at Ibrahim, he winked.

Death, as we have learned, is a certainty for all of us. We will all taste death, and we will all be held accountable and receive consequences for our actions on the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment sounds quite scary, but we’ve also learned that Allah (swt) is the All-Merciful. How does His Mercy fit into the Day of Judgment? If Allah is so Merciful, can’t He just forgive us for all of our sins so we go straight into Jannah? Let’s take a look at how Allah’s Mercy and Justice relate to each other out and how consequences will be dealt out on the Day of Qiyāmah.

ALLAH’S MERCY AND JUSTICE

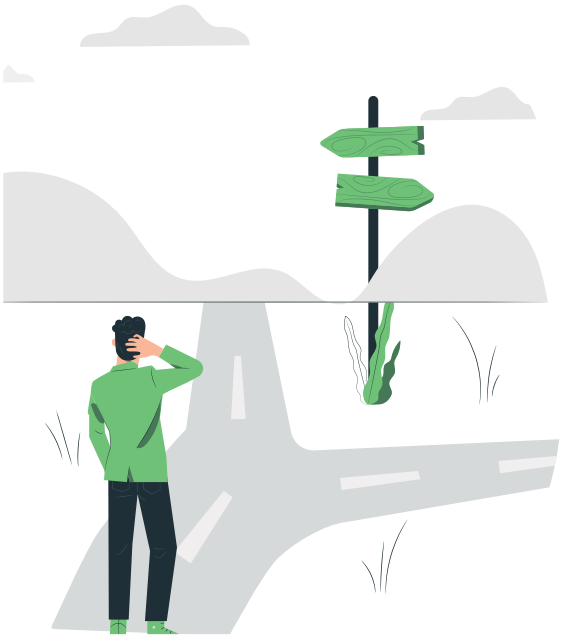
ʿADL: Justice.

It can also be used as a name to mean someone who is the essence of justice. In some ḥadīths, Al-ʿAdl (The All-Just) has been used as one of the perfect Names of Allah.

Allah (swt) is both Ar-Raḥmān and Al-ʿAdl — the All-Merciful and the All-Just. His Mercy and Justice go hand in hand and complement each other. We can better understand this by looking at our parents, whose justice is also a result of their mercy. Our parents, who love us dearly, are typically concerned about what we eat. Sure, they might let us eat dessert, but they do not allow us to eat dessert for every meal every day. Why not?

Well, If they were to not be concerned about what we eat, we could become extremely overweight and develop many diseases like diabetes, which may eventually end up killing us. Our parents love us and want us to live a healthy life, so this is why they have to intervene and stop us from something that may seem delightful. This is just one example of the balance between mercy and justice. If we break the rules our parents set for us, our parents might punish or discipline us. The consequences our parents set for us are an expression of their love and mercy. If they didn’t set or implement these consequences, we would continue to do things that harm us in the long term.

Let's say we didn't listen to our parents and, behind their backs, we had dessert for every single meal. In that case, when we get sick as a result, we have no one to blame but ourselves!



Similarly, out of His justice, Allah (swt) sent the Prophets (ṣ) and the Imāms (ʿa) after them to warn us that if we don't take the path of guidance, we will have failed the purpose for our creation and for living in this world. We will deprive ourselves of being able to receive so many of the special gifts He wanted to give us out of His love. Instead of adorning our souls with the beauty of good acts, we will have polluted them with evil. Allah (swt) tells us in the Noble Qurʾān:

> "Whoever accepts guidance, its benefit is for themselves, and whoever chooses misguidance, its harm is against themselves."[1]

Those who ignore the path of guidance, reject belief in Allah (swt) and the Judgment Day, and take their own path of committing sins and not performing their wājib duties will be deprived of those special gifts in the Hereafter. Unless they repent and return to the right path, they will instead find themselves in the hellfire — and they will have no one to blame but themselves! Those who end up in the hellfire have hurt and oppressed themselves:

> "Surely Allah does not oppress people at all; rather, people oppress themselves"[2]

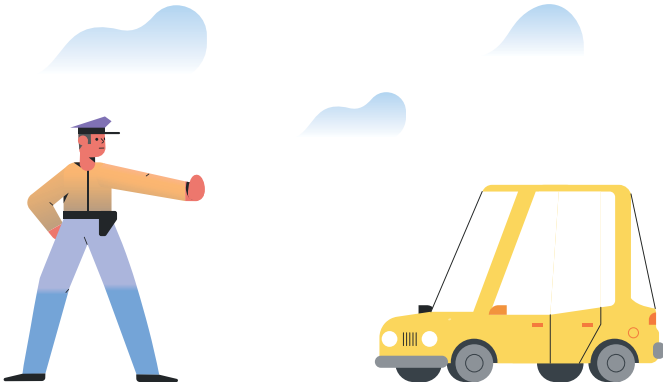
The hellfire is very, very severe. Allah describes its fire in the Qurʾān as being blazing hot with a frightening noise. It contains noxious gases, boiling water, and devilish companions. It is a place of humiliation, pain, and regret over not making better choices. Let us all decide from now to ask forgiveness and make the right choices going forward, before it's too late!

THINK, PAIR, SHARE:

THINK... While being pulled over for a traffic violation can be an unpleasant experience, do you think there is a benefit to it?

PAIR... Pair up with another student and discuss how policing or similar social structures, which people may fear or dislike, are necessary or even good for a society.

Share! Share your thought with the class



1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ash-Shūrā, 42:46

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Yūnus, 10:44

Activity 4.2a:

Can you think of any other unpleasant or difficult experiences that you have endured because you knew that it was good for you? Is there anything else that you do strictly for the benefits and not because you enjoy it? List the activity or experience and its benefit(s) in the chart below.

Unpleasant/Difficult Experience	How Is It Actually Beneficial or Good?
Ex. Going to the dentist	Protects you from cavities and diseases

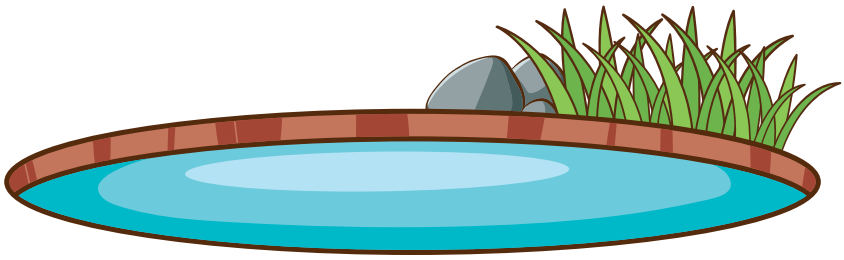
JANNAH: THE RESTING PLACE OF MOST

As we all know, on the Day of Judgment, we will also be taken to account for our actions. We will see our deeds and meet with their consequences. This will be a difficult experience for those who are not prepared for it. However, after accounting, and facing punishment for their deeds that were not forgiven, most people will eventually be allowed to enter Jannah (Heaven).

> "Those who obey Allah and His Messenger, He will make them into gardens from beneath which rivers flow, they will live therein eternally (forever)."[3]

Allah (swt) wants us to reach the purpose that He created us for. However, not all will enter Jannah right away. If we have committed a lot of sins for which we haven't been forgiven, we must first deal with the consequences before we can enter Jannah. Dealing with those consequences can take a *very* long time in the Hereafter and be an extremely difficult and long process. That's why it's important to always try to make the right choices, and to seek forgiveness from Allah (swt), the All-Forgiving, right away if we happen to slip.

FOCUS ACTIVITY: Imagine that your only source of drinking water must come from a pond in your backyard. Would it be safe for you to drink or does the water need to be filtered and purified first? Now, imagine that you have been neglecting and littering this pond for years, and perhaps your backyard entirely, because you didn't recognize the value of the water it contained. Will it make your job in purifying the water all the more harder? With a partner, come up with all of the steps you will now have to take to filter and purify your pond water to make it safe for drinking. Then, discuss some ways you could have cared for the pond if you had recognized its value from the start. How does this analogy relate to the idea of humans reaching Jannah?



3 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Nisāʾ, 4:13

CONSEQUENCES

In this life, there are three types of rights that we have to honor: the rights of Allah (swt), the self, and others. The rights of Allah (swt) are fulfilling acts of worship like praying or fasting. The rights of the self are using our body parts, for example, in the correct manner. The rights of others involve making sure that we do not harm or hurt others, physically or emotionally. If we violate any of these, we will be taken to account on the Day of Qiyāmah.

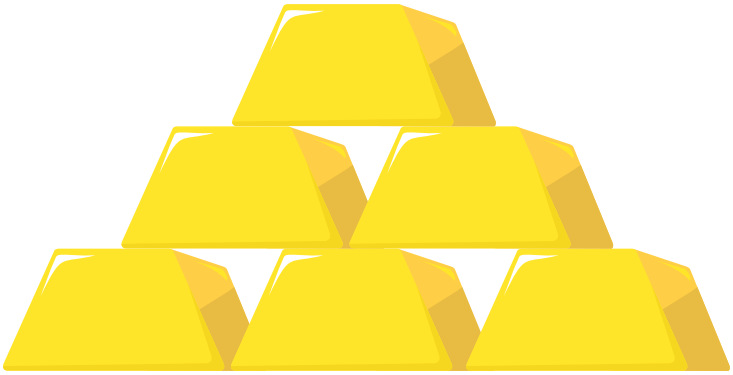
Allah (swt) is the All-Merciful, so yes, He *may* forgive us if we violate any rights against Him and our own selves if we have repented. However, Allah (swt) is also the All-Just, so He has made it very clear that out of His justice, He will not forgive us for violating the rights of others. These people have to forgive us themselves. This is why we have to also be extremely careful about observing ḥaqq un-nās, the rights of others. Our Prophets, Imāms, and scholars were very careful not to violate the rights of others. If we have knowingly hurt someone, we should make sure to make it up to them in this world before it is too late.

Additionally, if someone has committed many sins, he or she must be purified before entering Jannah. What does this mean? Well, Heaven is a pure place, and only the pure can enter. This is similar to how you must do wuḍūʾ before praying ṣalāh so that you are spiritually pure. So, how does one become pure enough to enter Jannah?

Well, for some people this involves asking forgiveness for one's sins, and becoming purified as a result. For others, this means suffering difficulties and tests in this life (although Allah (swt) will also challenge people in order to raise them to higher levels of faith and purity). The good deeds we perform also give us purity, and they can remove the spiritual pollution caused by sins that we committed.

But some believers will leave this world in an impure spiritual state. As a consequence, they may need to suffer difficulties in the life of Barzakh or the grave. Yet others may have to spend some time in Hell to be purified from their sins or bad characteristics. The amount of time depends on the person's actions.

Perhaps this example can better help us understand the need for spiritual cleansing in the hereafter:



If you are mining for gold and come across 100% pure 24-karat gold, it is in perfect condition! This gold can go straight to the jeweller to be sold.

However, at times, you find 24-karat gold, but it has a tiny bit of other metal mixed in. In order to purify this gold, you have to burn it just a little before it is ready to be sold.

Then, you sometimes find 24-karat gold that has a lot of other metal mixed in, and you have to burn it a lot in order to purify it.

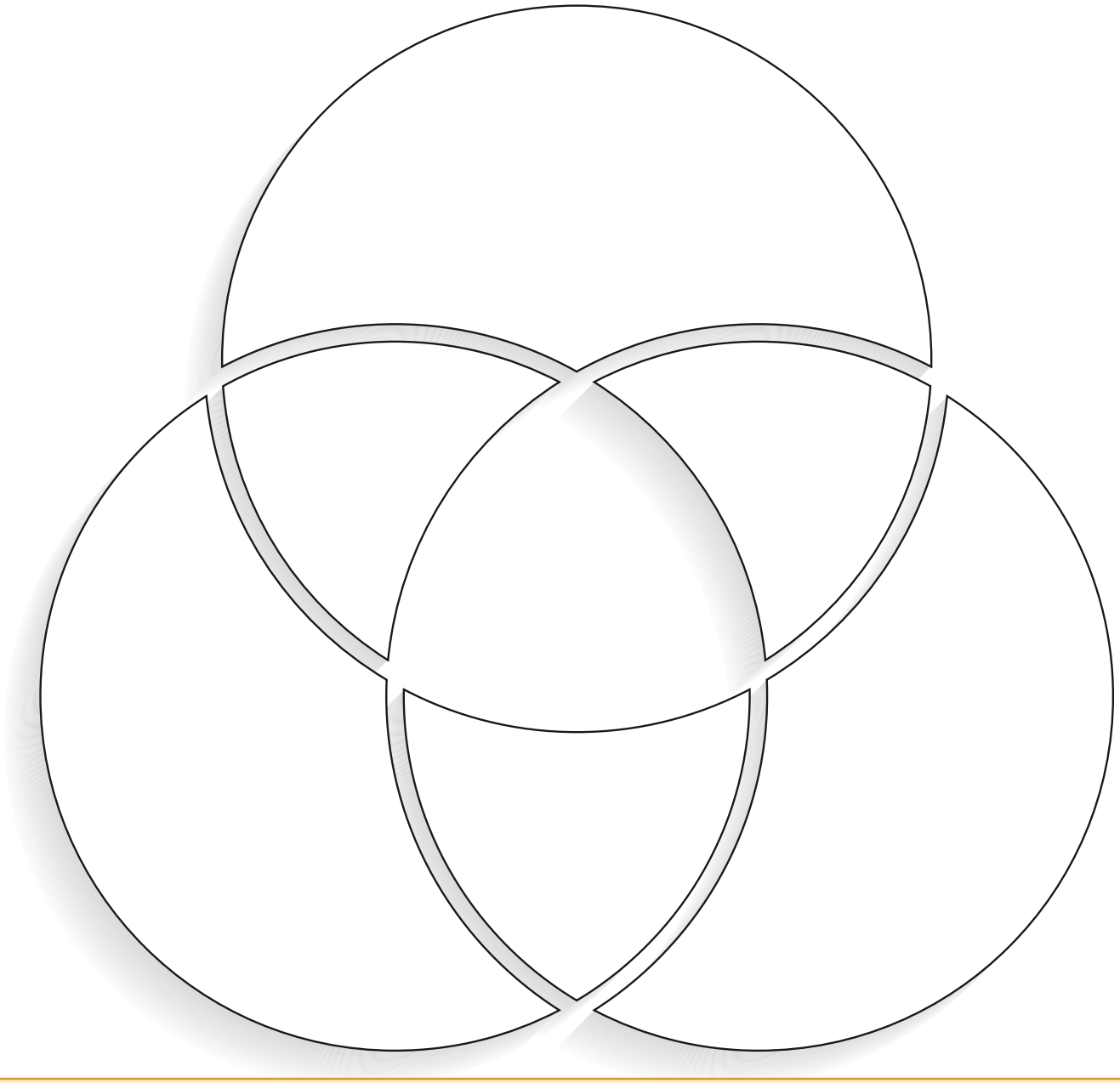
So, as you can see, the punishments after death purify a person when they left this world in an impure spiritual state; the scale of difficulties they face is based on their level of spiritual purity, and prepares them to be able to enter Heaven.

Most humans will fall in the three categories described above: not needing any purification, needing a little purification, or needing a lot of purification. But what about those people whom the Qur'ān says will reside in Hell forever?

Well, sometimes you find a metal that has zero gold in it. It doesn't matter how much you burn this metal, it will never become gold. These people, the ones who will remain in Hell forever, are those stubborn people who insist on rejecting belief in Allah (swt) and the Judgment Day despite knowing it to be the truth. They are the people who sin so often that sins become part of their character and cannot be separate from them. These are people who, even if they were given a chance to come back to this world, would not change their ways.

Activity 4.2b:

Using the Venn diagram below, brainstorm some examples of rights that belong in the three categories of rights that we have to honor in order to achieve Jannah: the rights of Allah (swt), the self, and the rights of others. Can you think of any examples that may fall into more than one category? If so, place it in the areas of the circles that overlap.



CONCLUSION

We are given only one chance at life. Our time is limited, and it is up to us to make the most of it. We should be quick to collect as many rewards as we can and avoid as many sins because we are answerable for our actions. We want to receive Allah's special gifts and mercy in this world and on the Day of Qiyāmah, and we want to enter Jannah immediately, without having to go through purification in Barzakh or the Hellfire. To do this, we must make good choices, observe the rights of Allah (swt), ourselves, and others, and seek forgiveness for all the wrongdoings in our lives. Inshāʾ Allah, then we will be amongst those who will enter and reside in Heaven forever.

4.3 The Soul

OBJECTIVES:

- Familiarize ourselves with the terms Ar-Rūḥ, An-Nafs, and Al-Qalb
- Differentiate between material and immaterial things
- Realize that the purpose of our life is to struggle against the parts of our nafs which encourages us to commit sins or follow desires that are outside of the limits set by Islam
- Understand that death is not the end of existence, so pain or pleasure in this world is short, while our soul will endure the same for much longer

Through Ibrahim's story, we have learned about the purpose of life, the guides sent to us to help us reach this purpose, and the necessity of Qiyāmah — a life after death. We saw how Ibrahim was surrounded by glass walls that were stopping him from reaching his destination. Glass walls can symbolize the bad qualities we possess or behaviors that hurt or harm our soul — they prevent our soul from reaching the potential it was created for.

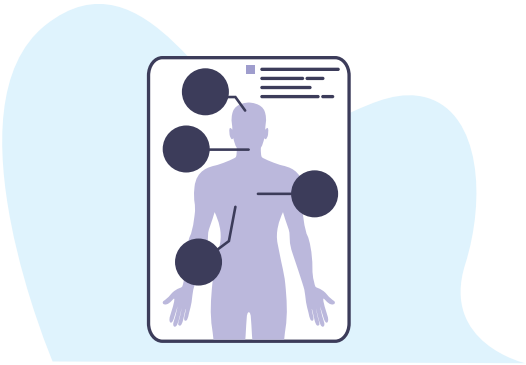
In this lesson, we will discuss that we have both a physical existence (our body) and our existence that goes beyond just our body (our soul). We will look at how being aware of our souls and looking after them allows us to break these walls that hold us back from reaching our purpose.

TERMINOLOGY

There are different words used for our soul in the Arabic language. The most important ones that you need to know are:

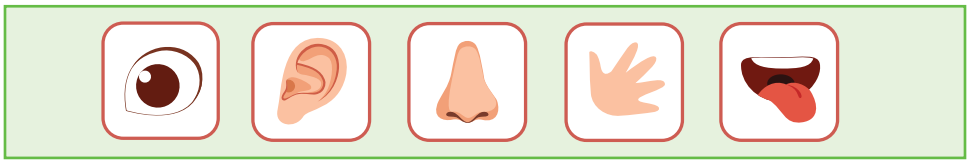
- Ar-Rūḥ (the Soul or Spirit)
- An-Nafs (the Soul or Spirit)
- Al-Qalb (the Spiritual Heart)

Even though all of these terms refer to our soul, or what makes us more than just a body, one might be used in another in order to help us understand.



THE WORLD BEYOND THE SENSES

Before we begin to discuss the soul, we need to reflect on the world in which we live. We can easily focus on the things we can see, hear, smell or feel in this world — things we can experience with our senses. We notice things we can measure and which have a shape and size. However, there are also many things in this world that we do not experience with our senses and which cannot be measured, such as emotions. We know for example that we feel love, anger, or fear, but we can't see or touch these things. We can't say "they are here" or "they are there" or "they are this big" or "that small".



Things we can see, hear, smell, touch or taste are called *material* things. These things have shape, color, and size.

Things we cannot perceive with our senses but which we can experience or think about *immaterial* things. These have no shape, size, or color.

Let's look at this story:

One day, a teacher was teaching his class and said:

Teacher: Can you see my arm? Yes? That means it exists.

Can you see my nose? Yes? That means it exists.

Can you see God? No? Does that mean he does not exist?

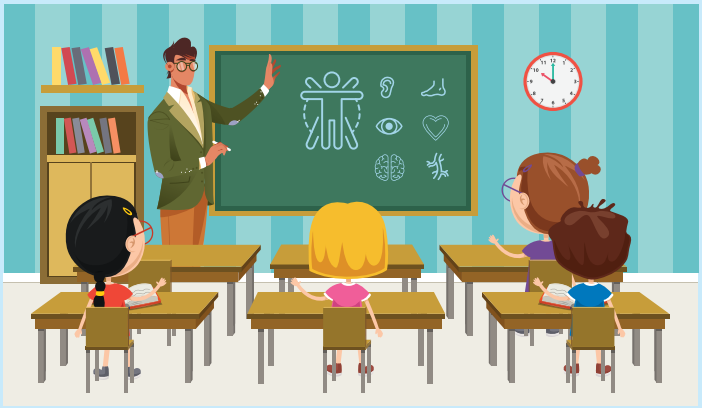
One of the students raised his hands and asked if he could add something. The teacher allowed him.

Student: Can you see the teacher's ears? Yes? That means they exist!

Can you see the teacher's hair? Yes? That means it exists.

Can you see the teacher's intelligence?

No, but you can see the effects of his intelligence. He is able



to learn, teach and make deductions. This tells us that he has intelligence, even though we cannot *see* his intelligence.

The teacher was very impressed by this answer from his student.

The student was trying to make the point that there are many things that still exist, like our intelligence or our emotions, even though we cannot see or measure them. We know they exist, and we see their effects. Just because we cannot see or touch or measure something, it does not mean that it does not exist.

THE SOUL

Our existence is made up not just of our body, which is physical, but also our soul. The soul is what makes you 'you'. Think about the following situation: You have a friend called Hasan. As Hasan grows up, his body goes through the usual processes of cell breakdown and regeneration. This means that as Hasan grows up, he loses all the cells in his body and gets new ones. In fact, Hasan changes so much in appearance that if you had not seen him for a few years and then ran into him on the street, you might not even recognize him. Now, all the cells in his body are different to the old ones and he looks totally different. Is he still Hasan? Yes.

So, if it is not his body parts or the cells of his body that make Hasan 'Hasan', what is it that makes him 'Hasan'? It is his soul. The soul is something that we can't see or experience with our five senses, but it is something that we all know is there with us. We know that a person's identity remains the same no matter what happens to their body because *something* about them stays the same. That something is the soul, or the 'spirit of life' that they have.

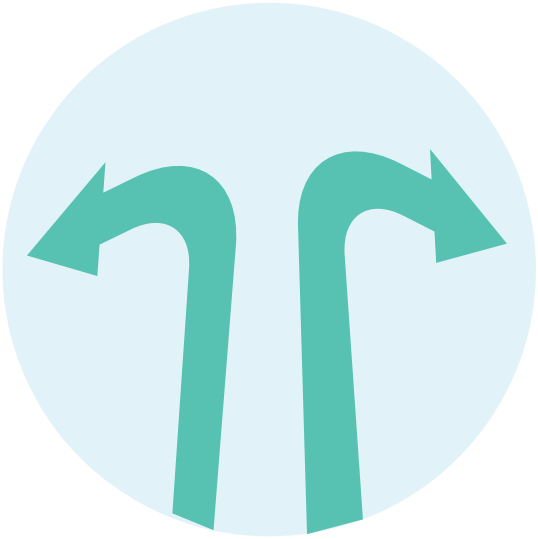
FORMING OUR SOULS

Every human being is born with a pure soul. Allah (swt) teaches the soul of every person what is good for it and what is harmful to it.

> "And the nafs, and the one who made it, and He inspired it with its virtues and vices."[1]

This is why we know (without being taught) that certain things, like being fair to people, are good and certain things, like being unfair to people, are evil.

However, when our soul is attached to our body, it has two different paths that it can take.



On the one hand, the untrained nafs can encourage a person to sin and follow their desires. If a person does this as a habit, they will end up worse off than an animal. This is because they are slaves of their desires and have taken on animalistic behaviors even though they were created to achieve much more than animals. On the other hand, the nafs, when controlled, can encourage a person to do good and to make themselves as perfect a person as possible. In doing so, they can become better than angels.

The purpose of our life is to struggle against the parts of our nafs which encourage us to commit sins or follow desires that are outside of the limits set by Islam. Let's take a look at a story that illustrates this point.

A poor woman with young children has two neighbors: one to her left, and one to her right. Both of her neighbors know that, tonight, this poor woman has no food for her children.

The neighbor on the left thinks about giving her own food for the night to her neighbor. A battle starts between the forces of good and the forces of evil in her soul. The good forces tell her to stay hungry herself so that her neighbor's young children, who need the food more, can eat, but the evil forces tell her that she should look after herself before anyone else. She eats the food herself and sleeps that night with a full stomach, but she is unsettled, because there is a voice that tells her she did something that was not quite right.

The neighbor on the right has the same battle between her good and evil forces. She makes a different decision though. She brings her food for her neighbor's children to eat. She sleeps hungry that night, but she is spiritually content, knowing that she did something good. This makes her feel good and happy inside, and soothes her hunger. She is filled with confidence and hope that Allah (swt) will provide for her in the upcoming day.

In every situation in life, we have a choice to follow the good or evil forces of our nafs. We will now look at some important points that will help us make the right choices.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ash-Shams, 91:7-8

Activity 4.3a: Nafs Role-Playing

Just as the story above illustrates an inner struggle to make the right choice, come up with a scenario in which a person has two options or choices to make, one that is beneficial for their nafs and one that is detrimental. Working with partners or as part of a group, outline the benefits or consequences to each option, both in terms of material and immaterial outcomes, and decide what the ideal choice, as Muslims, would be to make.

Role-Playing Scenario:

_____

_____

_____

Choice A:

MATERIAL BENEFITS (REAL-WORLD BENEFITS OR BENEFITS FOR OUR BODY)	**MATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** (REAL-WORLD CONSEQUENCES OR CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR BODY)

IMMATERIAL BENEFITS (BENEFITS FOR OUR SOUL)	**IMMATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** (CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR SOUL)

Choice B:

MATERIAL BENEFITS **(REAL-WORLD BENEFITS OR BENEFITS FOR OUR BODY)**	**MATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(REAL-WORLD CONSEQUENCES OR CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR BODY)**

IMMATERIAL BENEFITS **(BENEFITS FOR OUR SOUL)**	**IMMATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR SOUL)**

Ideal Choice:

LOOKING AFTER OUR SOUL

Sins

There are certain actions that hurt our soul and cause it to lean more towards evil things. These actions are the sins which Allah (swt) has forbidden us to do. There are other actions that give pleasure to our soul and which cause it to lean towards good things. These actions are the obligations and recommendations which Allah (swt) has ordered us to perform. Let us look at how sins affect our soul:

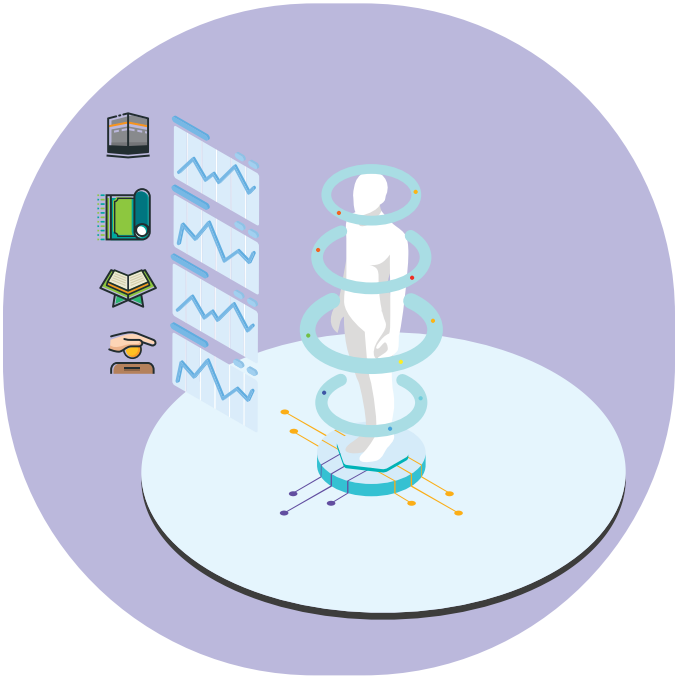
Imam aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) says: "Every person has a clear (spiritual) heart. When they commit a sin, a black spot contaminates their heart. If the person repents, the blackness goes away, but if they continue to sin, the blackness increases until it covers the heart completely."

Now that we know that sins harm our soul and cause it to become contaminated, we should be careful to look after the health of our soul. Just like we worry about which food tastes good, and which food is good for our body and which is bad, we should also worry about what is good for our soul and what is bad for our soul. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) says he is surprised by a person who worries about his physical food for his body, but does not worry about the immaterial food for his soul.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY: Think about a time when you did something wrong, like disrespecting your parents or lying. How did you feel afterwards? What is guilt (how would you define it?) and why does it happen?

Desires

Desires are a natural part of life. We all have desires, like the desire for food, water, and comfort. Allah (swt) has given us these desires in order to help us to survive in this world. However, these desires are meant to be controlled, followed in moderation, and kept within Islamic guidelines. If we let our desires overcome or control us, this becomes harmful to our soul.



One of the problems with following our desires is that they never end. One desire leads to the next, and we never feel like we have enough.

Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa) says: *"This world is like the water of the sea. No matter how much a thirsty person drinks from it, it only makes him thirstier until it kills him."*

People sometimes imagine that if they achieve some of their wordly goals, like being rich, popular, famous, or living in luxury, they will be happy. However, many who reach these goals feel miserable because they find they just want more and more, and no matter how much they get they can't seem to be happy.

Instead of focusing on following our physical desires and making this our life goal, we should instead work on keeping our souls healthy and make the perfection of our soul the purpose of our life. Such a focus will give us true happiness and contentment.

Focus Activity 4.3b:

As you have grown, the things that were most important to you have likely grown and evolved with you. Starting from a time in your childhood that you can remember, track the things that you have desired most and whether you were able to achieve/receive them. It could be a toy, winning a game or sports match, being recognized for a talent, etc. How many desires were left unfulfilled? Did you give up on them or carry them forward through the years?

AGE	THING MOST DESIRED	ACHIEVED OR UNFULFILLED

Each time that you achieved one of your desires, did it stop you from wanting anything more?

PROTECTING OUR SOUL

Let us protect our most precious asset, our souls, by keeping our desires in check and avoiding sins. This helps to keep our souls healthy. Many of the lessons in the Akhlāq section of our studies teach us about the conditions of our souls and spiritual hearts, and what actions can lead to the health, or sickness, of our souls / spiritual hearts. Similarly, we learn about ḥalāl and ḥarām in Fiqh so that we can protect our soul from the harmful effects of sins, and we can strengthen our souls by performing good actions.

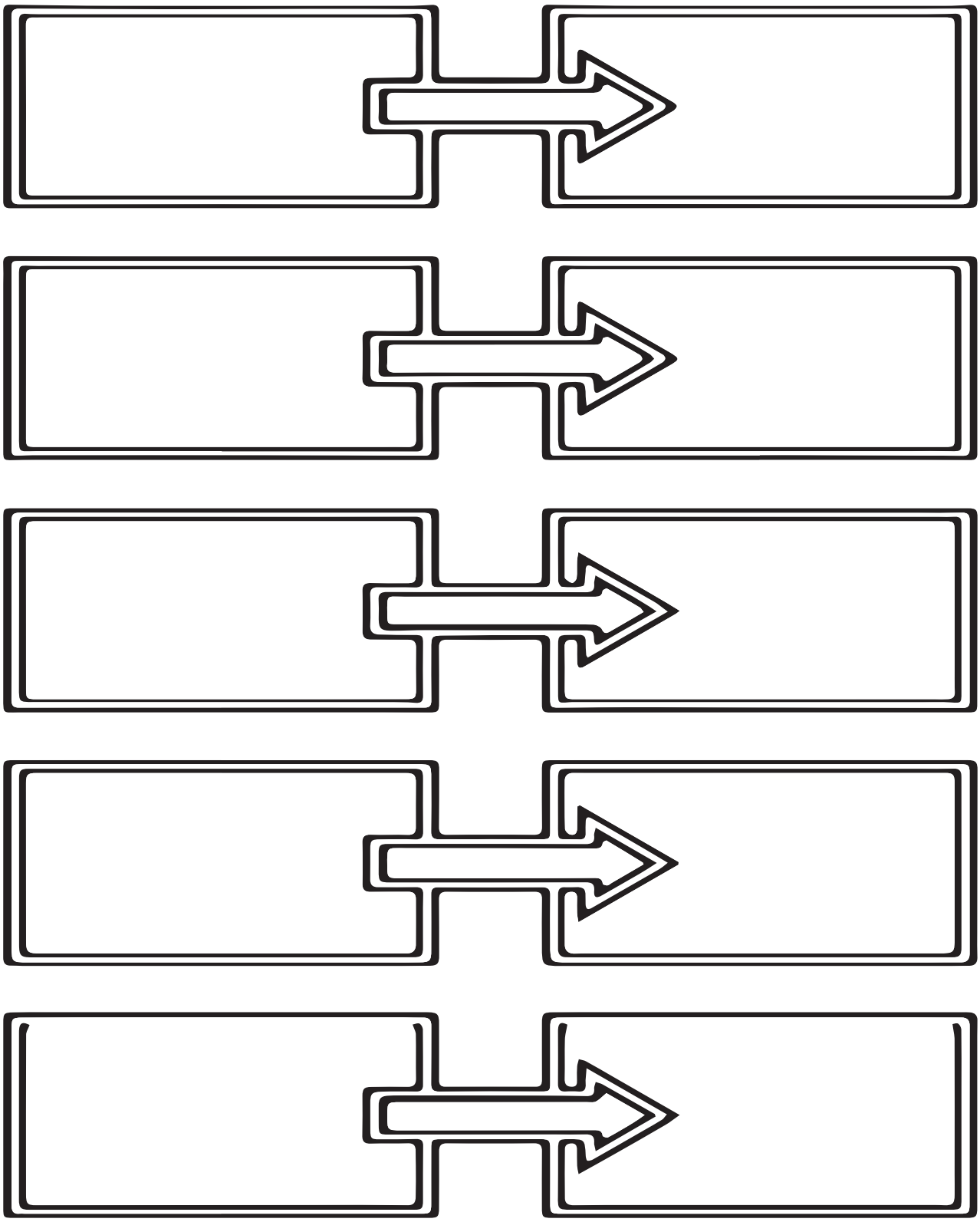
DEATH

Death is the separation of our soul from our body. Our body is no longer 'me' and becomes a corpse. It decomposes, is slowly absorbed into the Earth, and then becomes part of other things. The soul continues to live and transfers to the world of Barzakh and then to the Hereafter. When we are resurrected on Judgment Day, our soul and body will be reunited.

It is important to remember that death is not the end of existence. It is actually the beginning of a new life and a passage or bridge into another world. In this world, our soul continues to live and experience pain or pleasure. This is another reason why it is so important to look after our soul and protect it. While our bodies will experience pain or pleasure in this world for the short span of our life, our soul will experience pain or pleasure for a much longer time in the life after death.

Worksheet 4.3c: New Beginnings

Can you think of any examples from the world around you where one ending signifies a new beginning? For example, a caterpillar comes to an end in its cocoon but a new and beautiful creature, the butterfly, emerges.



NOTES

FIQH
(ISLAMIC LAWS)

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction to Taqlīd

1.2 Choosing a Marjaʿ

1.1 Introduction to Taqlīd

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify why taqīd is necessary
- Recognize how to choose a marjaʿ
- Recall common terms found in Islamic rulings
- Select a marjaʿ using the appropriate criteria

FATIMAH AND SAKINA LEARN ABOUT TAQLĪD

FATIMAH: Class today made me so hungry! Let's grab some fish and chips before we go to the masjid!

SAKINA: Mmm...that sounds good! But we'll have to make sure the fish is ḥalāl.

FATIMAH: What do you mean? Why would you have to worry about fish being ḥalāl? Obviously it's ḥalāl! We're not trying to eat pork or anything like that!

SAKINA: Yes, many types of fish are ḥalāl, but there are also some fish that we can't eat. Islam has certain guidelines for which fish are and aren't ḥalāl...but I can't remember what the guidelines are. Maybe we should ask Shaykh Ali to help us better understand which ones are okay according to our marjaʿ.

FATIMAH: But why do we need a marjaʿ to find out what to eat? I thought as long as we follow the Qurʾān, the Prophet, and his Ahl al-Bayt, then we're fine!

SAKINA: Well yeah, we have to follow the Qurʾān and Ahl al-Bayt, but we can't understand the laws directly from the Qurʾān and ḥadīth because we're not experts.

FATIMAH: Oh, wow. I'm still a little confused, though. If Islam is for everyone, how come only some people are experts?

SAKINA: Islam is for everyone, but not everyone is an expert! There is so much to know about Islam, just like healthcare. Everyone needs to know specific things about their health, but not everyone can become a doctor.

FATIMAH: Hmm, that makes sense I guess. But the rules can't be all that complicated can they? I thought Islam was an easy religion?

SAKINA: Well, I'm pretty sure Islam isn't supposed to be a complicated religion, but I never really thought about that. How about we go to my house for some lunch and we can talk about it more with my mom?

FATIMAH: Sounds good to me. I love your mom's cooking!

At Sakina's House

SAKINA: Salām ʿalaykum, Mom!

FATIMAH: Salām ʿalaykum, Aunty! Thanks for having me over!

MOM: Waʿalaykum as-salām girls! Of course, Fatimah! I'm happy you came over.

SAKINA: Mom, Fatimah and I were discussing Islamic rulings, and we had some questions that we couldn't figure out about following a marjaʿ.

MOM: Oh, very nice! We actually just had a class with Shaykh Ali at the masjid on this.

SAKINA: Well basically, we know that we have to follow the Qurʾān, the Prophet, and his Ahl al-Bayt. If we read the Qurʾān and some ḥadīth from the Prophet, why do we need to follow a marjaʿ?

MOM: Well, we have to remember that a marjaʿ isn't reading the Qurʾān and ḥadīth in the same way we are. They spend years and years studying Islam so that they're able to understand them accurately. So, once the marjaʿ completes all those years of study, he will do his best to derive the law from the Islamic sources.

FATIMAH: How does he decide what the laws are?

MOM: A marjaʿ has to study the Qurʾān, ḥadīth, Arabic language, history, biographies of narrators, comparative law, and other sources, and he must use his intellect and logic as well.

FATIMAH: What do we have to listen to marājiʿ about? Is it everything?

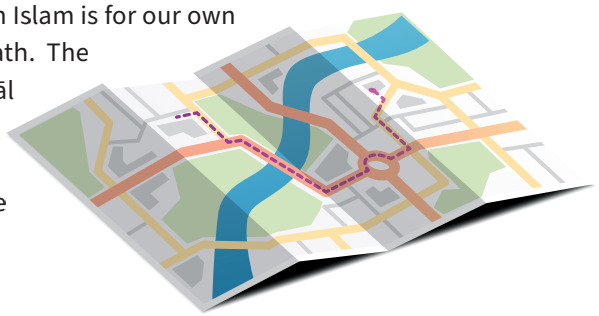
MOM: Well, we do have to understand our beliefs—ʿaqāʾid—ourselves, like believing in Allah. No one can make us believe. Our marājiʿ make sure that we know what Allah expects from us in the form of aḥkām, our rules. They're trying to figure out what Allah wants us to do and not do. So, we need to be really careful not to follow our own opinions on those issues. Without guidance from our marājiʿ, we would be lost.

FATIMAH: Wow! That sounds like hard work. They spend so many years making things easier for us to understand. And all we have to do is ask them for the answer!

MOM: Yes, exactly. Oh, look at the time! You should get going! You don't want to be late volunteering at the masjid!

AḤKĀM: A MAP FOR PERFECTION

As Muslims, we are constantly striving to get closer to Allah, to keep His love bright in our hearts, and to be on the path to perfection. Out of His infinite wisdom and mercy, Allah has given us a map, or set of instructions to follow, so that we will know how to achieve this goal. Everything in Islam is for our own benefit and leads us on this path. The guidelines regarding what is ḥalāl and ḥarām are called aḥkām. **Aḥkām** are those practical laws that help us practice Islam in the correct way to reach our goal.



AḤKĀM:
practical laws that help us practice Islam in the correct way to reach our goal

IJTIHĀD:
the science of deriving laws

MUJTAHID:
a scholar who is qualified to reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence

MARJAʿ:
a mujtahid who can also be relied upon by others to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion

TAQLĪD:
to refer to a certain marjaʿ's ruling when it comes to our practical Islamic life

WHY DO WE NEED SCHOLARS?

Allah has given us two primary guides: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Yet, we do not have access to our present Imām to ask him questions directly during this time. Therefore, ʿulamāʾ, or religious scholars, are our connection to the Maʿṣūmīn during this time when we do not have direct access to the Maʿṣūmīn ourselves. Scholars play a very important role in conveying the knowledge of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt to us. That is why Imam aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said:

> The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets.[1]

There are different levels of scholars in Islam. Some of our highest scholars spend several decades studying Islam with qualified teachers, and then become experts. They reach a level of scholarship where they are qualified to do what is called **ijtihād**. Ijtihād is the science of deriving laws. This is similar to how doctors must go through many years of medical school before they can officially be called doctors. A **mujtahid** is a scholar who is qualified to do ijtihād—meaning they can reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence.

1 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, P. 773

Mujtahids derive Islamic laws from three primary resources:

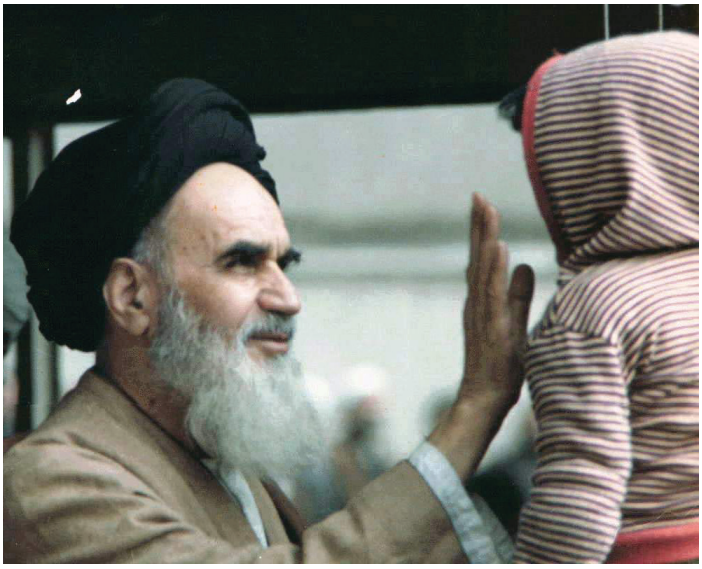
1. The Qurʾān
2. Ḥadīth and sunnah (traditions and actions of the Maʿṣūmīn)
3. Their ʿaql (intellect)

A mujtahid never *invents* or makes up Islamic laws. Ijtihād is a very precise and difficult process that requires a lot of knowledge and experience. As we can see above, the derivation of laws is based on authentic sources of evidence.

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

ʿaql عَقْلٌ (intellect, reason, common sense)

- Arabic Root Word: ع ق ل ʿa-q-l
- Root Meaning: to tie up, restrain
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 49
- Related Words: تَعْقِلُون - *taʿqilūn* - to use reason, understand
- Reference: Noble Qurʾān, 43:3



Imām Khomeini: an example of a scholar who dedicated his life to understanding, teaching, and applying Islam

MUJTAHIDS VS. MARĀJIʿ

What is the difference between a mujtahid and marjaʿ? A **marjaʿ** is a mujtahid who can also be relied upon by others to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion. Simply put, a marjaʿ is a mujtahid whom others refer to for Islamic rulings. So, all **marāji**ʿ are mujtahids, but not all mujtahids are marāji, just like how all surgeons are doctors, but not all doctors are surgeons.

MUJTAHID

a scholar who is qualified to reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence

MARJAʿ

a mujtahid who can also be relied upon by others to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion

WHAT IS TAQLĪD?

Taqlīd means to refer to a certain marjaʿ's ruling when it comes to our practical Islamic life. Let's look at an example to understand how important taqlīd is.

Imagine someone is playing in the school playground and finds some money. What are they supposed to do with it? Can they keep it, or do they have to try to find the owner, or give it to charity? To know the answer, we need to refer to a marjaʿ. We can go to the marjaʿ's website and see what he says about the rules of finding money on the ground, or ask a reliable scholar about the ruling. Then, if we follow the rule we find, we would be performing taqlīd.

There are many situations we come across every day for which we need to refer to a marjaʿ, and therefore, they play a very important role in our lives.

There are some obvious rules of Islam that everyone knows about—like the very need to say our daily prayers and to fast in the month of Ramaḍān—for which taqlīd doesn't apply (because they are so obvious). But for most issues—like how many times to say the tasbīḥāt al-Arbaʿah in the third and fourth rakʿahs, and other details about how to pray, fast, and do different things properly in many other areas of our life—where we will need to do taqlīd. The one case where someone wouldn't follow a marjaʿ is if they have studied and become experts themselves. But imagine if everyone had to derive the rulings themselves from reading Qur'ān and ḥadīth! This is no easy feat! For example, ḥādīth are written in different contexts and sometimes contradict each other. In the same way we consult a health expert's opinion when we are sick, or a dentist when we have a toothache, we turn to a marjaʿ to help us understand Islamic issues, such as knowing exactly how to pray, fast, eat ḥalal, and so on.

Activity 1.1: Can You Help Ahmad?

Islamic Laws

Ahmad is on a road trip with his family. It is time for ṣalāh. He remembers hearing that if a person travels outside their hometown, they may have to shorten their prayer. However, he doesn't know the exact details of the rule and how far out of town he has to be for the rule to apply.

1. Go to https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2248/

2. Find the section of *Islamic Laws* titled "Prayers of a Traveller." Click on this link and answer Ahmad's question about praying while out of town. What is the shortened prayer called and how many miles from his hometown does Ahmad have to be to begin shortening his prayers?

1.2 Choosing a Marjaʿ

At the masjid

HAMIDAH: Salāmun ʿalaykum, Sisters! How is everything?

SAKINA: ʿAlaykum salām, Sister Hamidah. We had a question about taqlīd.

HAMIDAH: Sure! What would you like to know?

SAKINA: Well, long story short, we're trying to figure out how you pick a marjaʿ. How do you know whom you can follow?

HAMIDAH: Well, there are guidelines to help us define who can be a marjaʿ. A marjaʿ must have the following qualities: he must be bāligh, ʿāqil, which means his mind is healthy and sound, a twelver Shīʿah of legitimate birth, and living. He must also be just, brave, and God-conscious. And last, but definitely not least, he needs to have the knowledge and intellectual ability to derive laws.

FATIMAH: That's a lot of qualifications!

HAMIDAH: Yes. But there's more! He must be obedient to the commands of Allah, and he must be someone who is aware of the conditions of the time.

FATIMAH: Conditions of the time…like, he has to know what's happening in the world today?

HAMIDAH: Yep, exactly!

SAKINA: How would you define a "just" marjaʿ? What does that mean?

HAMIDAH: Good question! When we say a marjaʿ must be just, it means that he must have good character and perform those things that are wājib and stay away from those things that are ḥarām.

FATIMAH: Wow. If he can be all that, then he's definitely someone we should listen to!

SAKINA: So, who is the marjaʿ? How do we find him?

HAMIDAH: There are many marājiʿ. Most of them study in cities like Qom and Najaf, the global centers of Islamic studies.

FATIMAH: Do we have to follow the rulings of all the marājiʿ?

HAMIDAH: You must follow the one who is most knowledgeable.

FATIMAH: So, who might that be?

HAMIDAH: Well, right now the marājiʿ that are among the most knowledgeable and followed by majority of the world's Shīʿah are Āyatullāh Sistani, Āyatullāh Khamenei, Āyatullāh Makārem Shirazī, Āyatullāh Waḥīd Khurasāni, Āyatullāh Zanjānī, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Isḥāq al-Fayyāḍ, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Ḥakīm, and Āyatullāh Bashīr Ḥusayn Najafī. But, we all have to go through the right process in order to identify whom to follow.

FATIMAH: How do you do that?

HAMIDAH: You can ask your parents if you are certain that they've done their research on who is the most knowledgeable. But it is best to consult our scholars, like Shaykh Ali, just like you would ask a doctor to refer you to a specialist.

FATIMAH: What does researching a marjaʿ mean? Like, seeing how many years he studied?

HAMIDAH: It's much more than the amount of years, and the scholars who are close to these marājiʿ have a better idea of who might be the most knowledgeable. If there are multiple marājiʿ who are equally knowledgeable, we can pick anyone from among them.

SAKINA: Okay, so once we identify the most knowledgeable marjaʿ, how do we find out about his rules?

HAMIDAH: There are a few ways to find out. You can find them in a book of his collected rulings. Or these days, our marājiʿ have official websites with the rulings published on them. But whatever resource you use, you must be certain that they are the accurate rulings of the marjaʿ you follow. You should also check if you have understood the law correctly by checking with someone with knowledge.

FATIMAH: Can we email our marājiʿ?

HAMIDAH: Yup, most of them will answer your emails and even answer texts.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Think... Sr. Hamidah defined a just marjaʿ as someone who "must have good character and perform those things that are wājib and stay away from those things that are ḥarām." Why is the character of the marjaʿ we follow so important? Do you think having a leader of good moral character and just actions really makes a difference in the life of the follower? Why or why not?

Pair... Pair up with another student and discuss your thoughts. Write down one question or thought you'd like to ask/share with the class.

Share! Share your question or thought with the class.

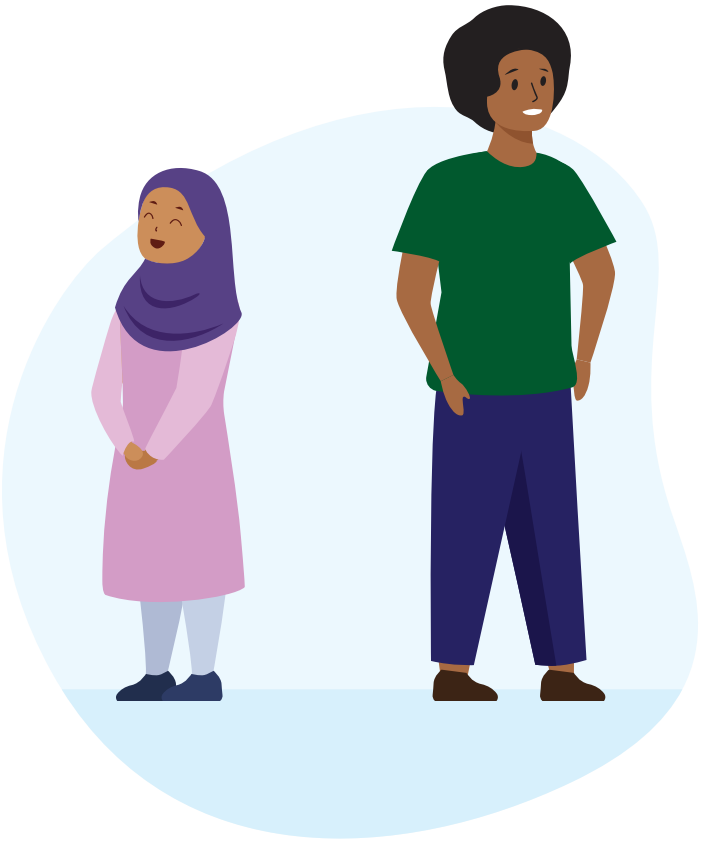
CHOOSING A MARJAʿ

In the previous lesson, we learned that it is very important to refer to a marjaʿ, a highly qualified scholar, to learn the practical rules of Islamic life. In this lesson, we will learn how we can choose a marjaʿ. There are three main ways for us to know which marjaʿ to follow:

1. A person (e.g., a learned scholar of Islam) may have the qualifications of identifying a mujtahid themselves.
2. Other people can ask two just and learned people who are qualified to identify the most knowledgeable mujtahid. An example of such a person may be a senior scholar in your community. If two such people confirm someone is the most learned marjaʿ, then we can follow this person as our marjaʿ.
3. If a number of people who are learned and qualified to identify a mujtahid state that a particular person is the most knowledgeable marjaʿ, then we can follow this person as our marjaʿ.

SOME IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

When we want to find out whether we should perform a certain action or stay away from it, we should refer to our marjaʿs website or book. Even if we look at these resources we should check our understanding with someone knowledgeable because sometimes it is possible to misunderstand the ruling. There are some words that we will come across while doing this, which we need to know the meanings of:



WĀJIB (OBLIGATORY): You must perform this action, and by not performing it, you have committed a sin.
Examples: praying, fasting

MUSTAḤAB: This action is not wājib, but is loved by Allah, earns His pleasure, and strengthens a human being's faith
Examples: reciting dhikr, adhān

MAKRŪH (DISLIKED): It is better not to perform this action, but by performing it, you do not have consequences in the hereafter; although, there may be spiritual consequences. Staying away from things that are makrūh attains reward.
Example: eating horse meat, overeating
Note: Sometimes, when the word makrūh is used, it doesn't mean that the action is better not to perform. Rather, it means that doing this action will result in less reward than usual. For example, praying ṣalāt al-jamāʿah behind someone who is a traveler is makrūh, meaning that one will not receive as much reward as when the imām is not a traveler. But it doesn't mean that it is better to pray alone!

ḤARĀM (PROHIBITED): You must not perform this action, and if you do it knowingly, it will have consequences in the hereafter (unless with Allah's mercy the sin is forgiven)
Examples: lying, stealing

MUBĀḤ: By performing this action, you neither receive reward or punishment.
Examples: sleeping, eating
These actions can often be turned into mustaḥab actions, such as drinking water for the sake of Allah, in order to take care of ourselves for the sake of worshipping Him.

Activity 1.2a: Common Terms

Match the rulings from Āyatullāh Sistani's website to the correct term on the left:

WĀJIB ●

ḤARĀM ●

MUSTAḤAB ●

MAKRŪH ●

- **Ruling 1077.** The following things are recommended when performing sajdah:

  1. saying takbīr before going into sajdah. For someone who performs prayers standing, this should be performed after he has raised his head from rukūʿ and has stood perfectly straight; ...

  4. when in sajdah, one should join his fingers together and place them in line with his ears such that the tips of his fingers face qibla;

- **Ruling 1627.** Some things are disapproved for a fasting person to do, including: ...

  4. smelling aromatic plants; ...

  8. having teeth extracted or doing anything that causes blood to come out of the mouth;

- **Ruling 1707.** Fasting on Eid al-Fiṭr and Eid al-Aḍḥā is unlawful. Furthermore, if one does not know whether it is the last day of Shaʿbān or the first day of Ramadān and fasts with the intention of it being the first day of Ramadān, it is unlawful.

- It is obligatory for a follower to learn the rulings which are of daily importance.

Activity 1.2b: Brainstorm

1. Do you know the name of a marjaʿ or more than one marjaʿ? List the name(s) below.

2. Can you think of a scholar you can ask to recommend a marjaʿ to you?

THE AGE OF TAKLĪF

We need to start following the rules in Islam, as outlined by a marjaʿ, by the age of taklīf. The age of taklīf is the age at which we become responsible for all the actions that we perform. When we become responsible for our actions, we must fulfill our wājibāt and stay away from the muḥarramāt. One who has reached the age of taklīf or bulūgh is called a **mukallaf** (for a boy) or **mukallafah** (for a girl). At this point, the angels begin recording all our good and bad actions in our book of deeds, which will be shown to us in the next world.

One who has reached the age of taklīf has attained a great honor! Why? It is at this time in our life that Allah (swt) is inviting us to attain the honor of worshipping Him. Allah (swt) says that at this time, we are able to get to know Him and serve Him with all our actions. We usually try to impress and do as much as we can for a best friend or someone we think is extremely important. What about trying to impress and serve the One who created us, protects us, and guides us so caringly throughout our life?

Activity 1.2c: Selecting a Marjaʿ

Using the steps we discussed, let's work together to select a marjaʿ whom you can use as a guide in your life.

1. Talk to your parents, a scholar or any knowledgeable person to help you identify who the most knowledgeable marjaʿ of the time is:

   _____

2. Do some research on the life the marjaʿ you will be doing taqlid of. Write about a story or fact about his life that interests you.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Now that you have picked a marjaʿ, let's get familiar with where and how we can find his rulings. Most marājiʿ have an Islamic Rulings book as well as a website for easy reference to rulings as well as questions and answers. You can also submit your own questions through these sites. Here are the websites for three marājiʿ; if yours is not listed, see if you can find his website or book — ask your teacher or scholar for help if you are having trouble.

- http://www.sistani.org/english/ (*Jurisprudence Made Easy* is a good book to start with; *Islamic Laws* is more detailed and can be used as a reference when needed)
- https://www.leader.ir/en
- https://www.makarem.ir/ (Click on English)

www.sistani.org

www.leader.ir/en

www.makarem/ir

3. Once you locate a website or book, find an answer to a question you have had, or a topic that your teacher suggests, such as ḥijāb, music, najāsah etc. Pay attention to the detail and depth of the answers given by your marjaʿ. Do you think the marjaʿ came to the answers to these questions or rulings easily? Explain why or why not.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Ṭahārah and Najāsah

2.2 Wuḍūʾ, Ghusl and Tayammum

2.1 Ṭahārah and Najāsah

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify five of the main najāsah and the condition for their transfer
- Determine that yaqīn is required for something to be considered najis
- Illustrate how to clean common najasah with water
- Use and apply related ṭahārah and najāsah terms

ṬĀHIR: ritually pure

NAJIS: ritually impure

YAQĪN: certainty

Cleanliness is a very important part of Islam. When we say something is clean, we generally mean that it is free from dirt. For example, if we wash a shirt that has dirt or food stains on it, we would consider it *physically* clean. However, in Islam, physical cleanliness goes hand-in-hand with ritual purity. After all, Allah (swt) says in the Qur'ān:

وَاللَّـهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ

And Allah loves those who become pure.[1]

CLEANLINESS VS. ṬAHĀRAH

The word used in the above verse is **muṭṭahhirīn**. These are the people who become **ṭāhir**, or ritually pure. It is important to note that there is a difference between cleanliness and **ṭahārah**. Some things can be both clean and ṭāhir. For example, a freshly washed shirt can be both clean and ṭāhir. On the other hand, something can be ṭāhir, but it may not be clean. For example, if you have mud on your shirt, it is not clean, but it is still considered ṭāhir.

The opposite of ṭāhir is **najis**. When something is **najis,** it is ritually impure. Just like the terms "clean" and "ṭāhir" differ in meaning, so do "najis" and "dirty." A thing can be clean, but that does not make it ṭāhir. For example, a freshly bathed dog may be clean, but not ṭāhir; it is najis.

Inshā'Allāh, in the following lessons, we will delve deeper into the principles of ṭahārah and najāsah, and take an in-depth look on how to make najis objects ṭāhir.

WHEN DOES SOMETHING BECOME NAJIS?

It is good to be in a state of physical ṭahārah (i.e., not being najis), but it becomes wājib when you must perform certain actions that requires physical ṭahārah, such as ṣalāh. Therefore, we must take a look at the rules on how to make something ṭāhir. First, however, we have to learn how to determine when something is najis. When it comes to najāsah and ṭahārah, there is a golden rule that we must keep in mind:

Everything is ṭāhir unless you know (with yaqīn) that it is najis!

Yaqīn means certainty — you must be certain and sure that something is najis because, for example, you saw it become najis with your own eyes. For example, if you accidentally cut yourself and see the blood drip on the floor, then you know the floor has become najis.

1 *Noble Qur'ān,* At-Tawbah, 9:108

If you are not certain and sure that something is najis, then you should consider it to be ṭāhir. For example, the bathroom floor might be wet, but that doesn't mean it is najis. Or, if a baby's pants are wet, it doesn't necessarily mean they are najis.

ʿAYN AN-NAJĀSAH

There are certain objects that are inherently najis and cannot be purified through any means, but can make other things najis upon contact. These objects are called ʿ**ayn an-najis**, which means "inherently najis." Something that is usually ṭāhir, like your body, clothing, or food, can become najis through contact with an ʿayn an-najāsah.

The main objects that are ʿ**ayn an-najis** that you are likely to come across are:

- Urine
- Faeces
- Blood
- Pigs and products derived from pigs
- Dogs

HOW IS NAJĀSAH TRANSFERRED?

When something that is najis comes into contact with something that is ṭāhir, the ṭāhir thing becomes temporarily najis (mutanajjis) and must be cleaned. However, najāsah will only be transferred if either of the two things is wet or moist to the point that it will transfer its wetness to the other thing. If both things are dry, the najāsah will not spread. For example, if a dog rubs against your pants, and both the dog and your pants are dry, then your pants do not become najis. However, if either your pants or the dog are wet or moist to the point that wetness transfers, then that part of your pants do become najis.

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Maaʾ مَآء (water)

- Arabic Root Word: م و ه m-w-h
- Root Meaning: Water
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 63
- Reference: Noble Qurʾān, 21:30

HOW TO MAKE NAJIS OBJECTS ṬĀHIR AGAIN

So, now we know how to deem if something is najis or ṭāhir. Once we are certain that something is najis, we now must know how to make it ṭāhir. In order to make a najis object ṭāhir again, we must use one of the purifying agents, or **muṭahhirāt.**

The most common of the muṭahhirāt is water, as long as it meets the following criteria:

1. The water itself must be ṭāhir.
2. The water must be **muṭlaq**, or pure, which means that it should not be **muḍāf** (mixed with something). This means that one would use the word "water" to describe it. For example, if you have a glass of water and add a packet of Kool-Aid to it, the water is now mixed, so one would not call it water anymore. On the contrary, river water may have some dirt, rocks, or insects in it, but one would still call it water, so it would not be considered muḍāf or mixed. Similarly, water that has a slight flavor or smell, like sea water or pool water that has some chlorine, is also considered muṭlaq, because it's still called "water".

So, how can water make something ṭāhir? In general, the following two things must happen:

1. The object should be washed with plain water until the water that flows off from the object being washed is also considered plain water and not water that is mixed with najāsah. In other words, its smell, color, and taste should no longer change as it flows off from the object being washed. For example, if washing blood off a shirt, it should be washed until the water dripping off from the shirt is not red or pink-colored.
2. The particles of the najāsah (e.g., blood, urine, etc.) should not remain on the object after it has been washed. If microscopic particles remain or some smell or color remains, like a leftover blood stain after the blood has been washed away, this is okay and the object is still considered ṭāhir.

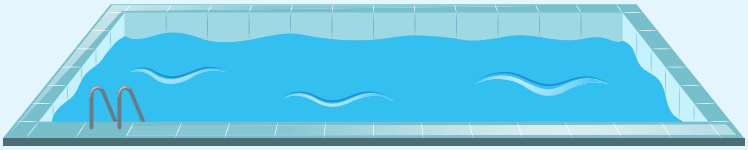
CATEGORIES OF WATER

We have said that we usually use water to make something ṭāhir again. In general, it is important to remember that there are two categories of water when it comes to Islamic rulings:

- **QALĪL WATER:**
  Still water that is less than 384L in volume. For example: water in water bottle, water in a small pot or kettle
- **KURR OR RUNNING WATER:**
  Water that is running or flowing, or still water that is more than 384L in volume. For example: water in a river, water from a tap or hose

running water

qalīl water



kurr water 101 gallons (384 L) or more)

ṭāhir soil

MAKING THINGS ṬĀHIR

The following table gives more specific instructions for how to make certain najis objects ṭāhir again.

EXAMPLE OF NAJĀSAH	PROCESS FOR MAKING IT ṬĀHIR
Najis things in general	Wash until the ʿayn an-najāsah is removed and the water flowing off the object is pure
Body/clothes made najis by urine	**Running or Kurr water:** Washing once is sufficient after the ʿayn an-najāsah is removed **Non-running water:** Must be washed twice after the ʿayn an-najāsah is removed In both cases, clothes should be squeezed after washing.
Rugs/carpets made najis by urine	**Running and Kurr water:** Washing once is sufficient after the ʿayn an-najāsah is removed. Pressure should be applied to that area of the rug / carpet so it is squeezed. **Qalīl water:** Must be washed twice after the ʿayn an-najāsah is removed, and then the water must be squeezed out each time.
Interior of a container (e.g., pot, bowl, plate)	**Āyatullāh Sistani:** Wash it three times as an obligatory precaution, whether using qalīl, kurr, or running water **Āyatullāh Khamenei:** Wash it three times if using qalīl water and once if using kurr or running water.
A utensil that a dog licks or drinks from	The inside should be scrubbed with ṭāhir soil. Then, the soil should be taken out and the utensil should be washed three times with water.

TERMINOLOGY REVIEW

Najis	Ritually impure
Ṭāhir	Ritually pure
Muṭahhir	Purifying agent that can make a najis thing ṭāhir again
Mutanajjis	When something is inherently ṭāhir, but becomes najis because of contact with a najis thing
Kurr water	A body of water whose volume is equivalent to a cube that is 3.5 hand spans wide, long and deep, or about 384 litres or 101 US gallons
Qalīl water	Water that is not running and less than kurr

RULES OF EMPTYING THE BLADDER AND BOWEL

The following are the rules for making ourselves ṭāhir after emptying the bowel and bladder:

URINE	The urinary outlet does not become pure with anything other than water.
	Āyatullāh Sistani: It is sufficient to wash once, regardless of the volume or type of water (kurr, qalīl, or running water). However, the recommended precaution is to wash twice, and better yet to wash three times.
	Āyatullāh Khamenei: The obligatory precaution is to wash it twice.
FECES	If water is being used to purify, one must wash enough to ensure that no trace of faeces remains. However, there is no harm if there is a slight color or smell that lingers. If washed thoroughly in the first instance, leaving behind no particles of stool, then it is sufficient

It is not permissible to have one's front or back toward the qiblah whilst relieving oneself. Knowing the direction of the qiblah is therefore necessary before using the restroom.

It is obligatory (wājib) for one to cover their private parts when using the bathroom from people who are bāligh, even if they are maḥram.

Activity 2.1a: Ṭahārah and Najāsah Review Worksheet

Match the Term to the the correct example

TERM		EXAMPLE	
Qalīl water	•	•	A swimming pool
Muṭahhir	•	•	My pants after a dog licks them
Najis	•	•	Pure water
Mutanajjis	•	•	Blood
Kurr water	•	•	A bowl of water

Activity 2.1b: Am I Tāhir or Najis?

Apply the correct rule to each scenario in order to make the najis thing ṭāhir again.

1. Fatima is studying at her non-Muslim friend's house and wants to pray. She was not sure if the floor of her friend's room is ṭāhir or najis. What should she do in this situation?

2. Zaid is with his family at the shopping mall and needs to use the restroom. Since he does not have a water bottle, he uses only tissues to clean himself. Is Zaid ṭāhir? Why or why not?

3. While playing soccer, Ali falls on his knees, and they start to bleed on his shorts. By the time Ali gets home, the blood on his shorts becomes dry, and as he is trying to put his shorts in the laundry basket, they fall on the ground. Is the ground now najis since it came into contact with the dry shorts that had blood on them? How can Ali make his shorts ṭāhir again before putting them into the laundry basket?

4. Ahmad was playing soccer with his friends, and his legs and clothing became muddy. Does he have to make his clothes ṭāhir or are they just dirty?

5. Hasan is at the beach swimming and noticed that another swimmer brought his dog in the water with him. Is the beach water now najis? Why or why not?

2.2 Wuḍūʾ, Ghusl and Tayammum

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify when it is wājib and mustaḥab to be in wuḍūʾ
- List the conditions of wuḍūʾand actions that invalidate ones wuḍūʾ
- Identify how and when to do ghusl irtimāsī and tartībī
- Recognize when and how to do tayammum

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ

O you who have faith! When you stand up for prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe a part of your heads and feet up to the ankles.[1]

From this verse, we understand that before prayer, Allah (swt) tells us to wash and wipe parts of our bodies in a certain way. This is called **wuḍū**ʾ. The word wuḍūʾ (in Arabic) literally means cleanliness. By performing wuḍūʾ, a person attains spiritual purity and is able to prepare for acts of worship by cleansing both the soul and body. Later, we will learn about ghusl, which is another way of attaining cleanliness, and tayammum, which is done in certain cases when there is no water available.

Practical Demonstration of Wuḍūʾ

https://youtu.be/HFwMLNE90oQ

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Qumtum قُمتُم (you stand up)

- Arabic Root Word: قوم q-w-m
- Root Meaning: Standing
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 660
- Related Words: إِقَامَ- iqāma- to establish
  **Note: adding a تُم to the end of an Arabic root word adds the word "you" to it*
- Reference: Noble Qurʾān, 21:73
- Common phrases:
  قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ In iqāmah, *"Indeed the prayer has been established"*
  القائم Title of Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj), *"the Uprisier"*
  بِحَوْلِ اللهِ وَ قُـوَّتِهِ أَقُومُ وَ أَقْـعُدُ In ṣalāh,
  "With the help and power of Allah (swt) I stand and sit"

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:6

WHEN TO PERFORM WUḌŪʾ

There are certain instances in which it is wājib to be in the state of **wuḍūʾ**. They are as follows:

- Before performing our daily prayers
- Before touching the script of the Noble Qurʾān
- Before performing a wājib ṭawāf
- Before touching the names of Allah (swt) in all languages
- According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, it is iḥtiyāṭ wājib (precautionary obligatory) not to touch the name of the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt without taḥārah, and according to Āyatullāh Sistani, it is iḥtiyāṭ mustaḥab to avoid doing so. As Āyatullāh Khamenei gives an obligatory precaution on this issue, a person can follow the ruling of Āyatullāh Sistani.

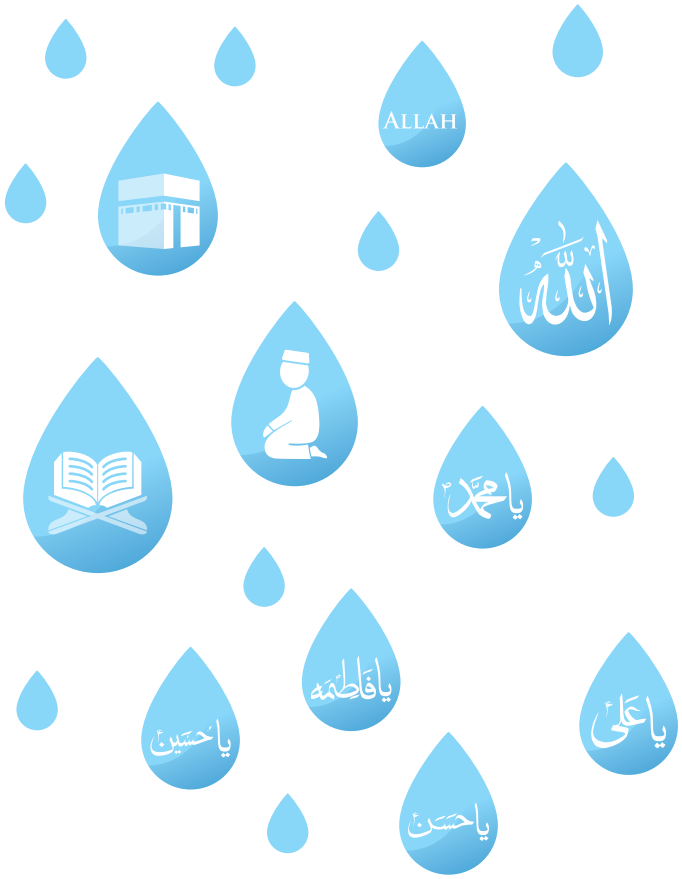
Then, there are some instances where it is recommended to be in a state of wuḍūʾ. Some of these are:

- Before performing any act of worship, such as reciting duʿā
- Before sleeping
- When reciting Qurʾān
- When performing ziyārah
- Touching the names of the Maʿṣūmīn in any language
- All the time when it is possible

امام صادق (عليه السلام):

مَنْ تَطَهَّرَ ثُمَّ أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ بَاتَ وَ فِرَاشُهُ كَمَسْجِدِهِ

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa): For one who sleeps after performing wuḍūʾ, the bed in which he sleeps will be like a masjid [in which he worships through the night].[2]



CHALLENGE ACCEPTED?

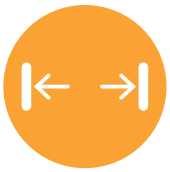
In pairs, build 2 seperate acronyms or mnemonics to help remember when it is wājib to be in wuḍūʾ and when it is mustaḥab. Present to the class and vote on who made the best one!

2 *Wasāʾil Ash-Shīʿah*, V. 1, P. 378

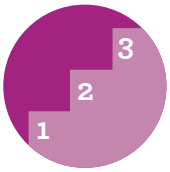
permission for water and place

pure and ṭāhir water

ṭāhir body parts



no long gaps between steps



correct order

without help

intention: proximity to Allah (swt)

water must not be harmful

no barrier

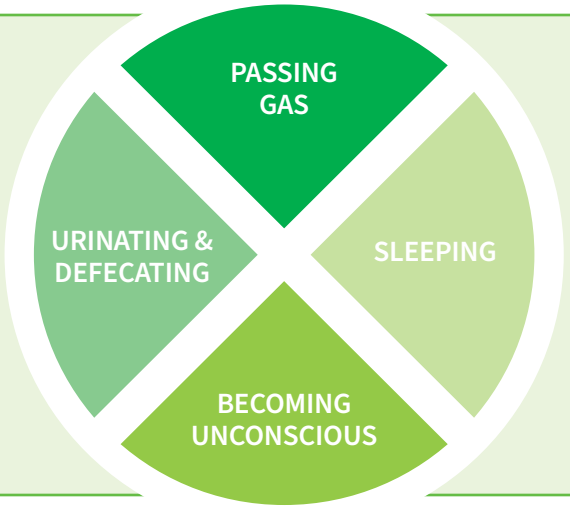
CONDITIONS OF WUḌŪʾ

When performing wuḍūʾ, we should have the intention in our mind that we are performing wuḍūʾ in obedience to Allah (swt) and to gain nearness to Him. We must also ensure that the following 10 conditions are met:

1. The water we use and the place we are doing wuḍūʾ are mubāḥ — this means that we must have permission to use them. We should also be careful not to waste water.
2. The water we use must be pure (muṭlaq)
3. The water we use must be ṭāhir (ritually clean, not najis)
4. Before we start wuḍūʾ, the body parts we will wash or wipe during wuḍūʾ must be ṭāhir. So, if a person has a cut on their arm that still has some blood on it, they need to wash the blood off. This is not necessary for the parts that aren't washed in wuḍuʾ, such as your shoulder, but you must wash this before offering ṣalāh, unless it is from an open wound that hasn't yet healed.
5. You must observe **muwālāt**, which means that you cannot have long gaps between the different stages of wuḍūʾ.
6. We must follow the proper **tartīb**, meaning you must perform the actions of wuḍūʾ in the correct order, which will be discussed in the next section.
7. We must perform wuḍūʾ by ourselves. No one can help in getting the water to our face or arms, or with washing or wiping.
8. We should perform wuḍūʾ with the intention of attaining proximity to Allah (swt) and obeying Him.
9. Using water must not be harmful for us. If water is harmful to us, we need to use other methods to achieve ṭahārah.
10. There must not be an obstruction for water to reach the parts of the body on which wuḍūʾ is performed. Things like paint or nail polish, which would cause a barrier, need to be removed.

ACTIONS THAT INVALIDATE WUḌŪʾ

A person remains in the state of wuḍū until they perform one of the actions that breaks the wuḍūʾ. If any one of these occur, a person must repeat their wuḍūʾ before doing anything else that requires wuḍūʾ. Some of these actions are:



Activity 2.2a: Conditions of Wuḍūʾ

1. Reflect on the first condition of wuḍūʾ, we cannot use anyone's water without seeking permission, nor can we be wasteful. Why is this important? How can we extend this thinking into our lives and understanding of the world?

2. Categorize the conditions of wuḍūʾ into the following 3 headings:

   The Water

   The Person

   The Acts

GHUSL

There are two types of ablutions in Islam: wuḍūʾ and ghusl. We already talked about wuḍūʾ, which is a partial washing/wiping of the body. The other type of ablution is called **ghusl.** The word ghusl (in Arabic) literally means the purity that one attains after washing and removing dirt from something. The fiqh definition of ghusl is washing the entire body in a certain manner with the intention of becoming closer to Allah (swt). By performing ghusl, a person attains spiritual purity. Thus, ghusl is an important part of ʿibādah (worship).

HOW DO WE PERFORM GHUSL?

Ghusl can be performed in two ways: **irtimāsī** and **tartībī**. Irtimāsī is when one submerges their whole body underwater. This must be done all at once, so it is less common. We usually do ghusl tartībī, or sequentially, meaning the parts of the body are washed in a certain order. The steps for ghusl tartībi are the following:

REMOVE BARRIERS & IMPURITIES

Make sure the body is free of any impurity or barrier that would block water. A barrier in this case would be anything that prevents water from covering that area.

- *Examples of barriers: nail polish (even breathable), paint, or band-aids. Henna or ink that has been absorbed into the skin are not considered barriers because the skin is not covered.*

MAKE INTENTION

Make the intention of performing ghusl for the sake of obeying and attaining closeness to Allah (swt).

- *The intention does not have to be said out loud, as long as you know what you are doing and why you are doing it.*

STEP OUT OF WATER

If you are already in the shower, you need to step out of the flow of the water and then step back in to start your ghusl. When moving on to the next part of the ghusl, it is again important to step out of the shower and step back in for the next part. This particular rule is the ruling of Āyatullāh Sistani and is obligatory precaution. Therefore, you can refer to the rulings of other marājiʿ who do not require this movement out and back into the flow of water.

WASH HEAD AND NECK

Wash the head and neck, making sure water reaches every part.

- *Some marājiʿ say it is better to run your hands over all parts of the body.*
- *There is no need to go inside the ears when washing your head.*
- *As you stand under the shower head, there is no problem if the rest of your body gets wet with your neck.*
- *Short hair that is considered part of the body must be washed.*
- *As for long hair:*
  - ▷ *According to Āyatullāh Sistani, It is not obligatory to wash long hair.*
  - ▷ *According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, as per obligatory precaution, long hair must be washed*

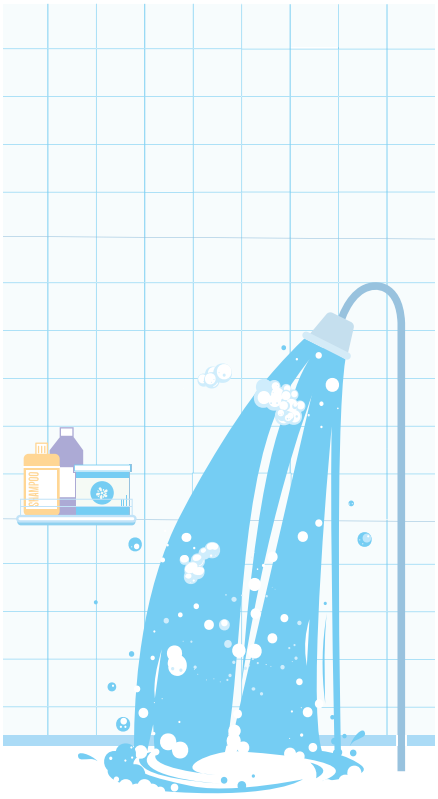
WASH BODY

Wash the body.

- *According to Āyatullāh Sistani, after washing the head, one can simply wash the entire body. There is no need to wash the right side, then the left. However, it is better to wash the right first.*
- *According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, per obligatory precaution, the right side must first be washed, and then the left.*
- *When washing the body, we should make sure that water reaches every part (a person can be under the shower and water can be reaching all places, but if they are making the intention for the right side and then the left side, they must step out of the flow of the water between the two parts).*

TIPS FOR GHUSL TARTĪBĪ:

- While washing each section, it is best if you wash extra to make sure you have washed completely (e.g., as you are washing the right side, wash a little of your left side as well).
- It is better to wash central areas (e.g., entire belly button and private parts) with each side.
- Unlike wuḍūʾ, when washing a particular part, you do **not** need to wash from top to bottom or use your hands to wash over that part.
- Unlike wuḍūʾ, continuity is **not** a condition. So, if you wash your head and neck, and then decide to shampoo your hair, and then wash your right side, that is acceptable. It also means if you miss a part of the left side and realize later, you can wash that part again after the ghusl without restarting. According to Āyatullāh Sistani, even if you miss a part of the right side and realize later, you can wash that part again after the ghusl without restarting.
- If you realize after ghusl that you missed a part of your ghusl, you have to restart from that point. For example, if you come out of the shower and realize you missed your right hand, you should:
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Khamenei: wash your right hand (only), then your left side fully.
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Sistani: wash your right hand and do not need to wash the left side of the body afterwards



WHEN IS GHUSL PERFORMED?

We will discuss the specific situations for when ghusl becomes obligatory in other lessons. There are also situations where ghusl is recommended (mustaḥab). The most common reasons for this are:

- **Ghusl al-Jumuʿah:** It is recommended to perform ghusl on Friday morning before the time of Ẓuhr. This has the effect of washing many of our sins away.
- **Ghusl on special days:** There are many days or nights throughout the year on which performing ghusl is highly recommended, such as Laylat ul-Qadr.

GHUSL: washing the entire body in a certain manner with the intention of becoming closer to Allah (swt)

IRTIMĀSĪ: by submersion

TARTĪBĪ: sequentially

TAYAMMUM: WHEN IS IT PERFORMED?

If water is not available, we can purify ourselves with clean earth or soil instead of performing wuḍūʾ or ghusl, and this is called **tayammum**. This option can only be exercised when we do not have access to water, water is harmful to us, or we do not have enough time to perform wuḍūʾ or ghusl.

RULES OF TAYAMMUM

Tayammum can be performed on one of the following things (in order of preference):

1. Earth
2. Sand
3. Pebbles or stone

The item on which tayammum is performed must be:

- Dry
- Ṭāhir
- According to Āyatullāh Sistani, it is iḥtiyāṭ wājib (precautionary obligatory) that it leaves some particles of soil or dust on our hands, and it is better that we do not shake these off. According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, this is mustaḥab but not required.

Practical Demonstration of Tayammum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh0gxMmyPSk

HOW TO PERFORM TAYAMMUM

Niyyah: Make the intention to perform tayammum for the sake of attaining nearness to Allah (swt).

Remove barriers: Like in wuḍūʾ, any barriers on the forehead and hands, such as rings, should be removed.

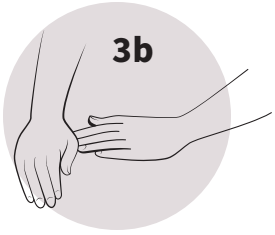
Step 1: Strike the palms of the hands simultaneously on earth, sand, or stone (in order of preference) that is dry and clean.

Step 2: Pull both palms together from the top of the forehead where the hair grows down to the bridge of the nose. Both sides of the forehead joining the ears and over the eyebrows should be included. Try to cover the entire forehead.

Step 3: Wipe the palm of the left hand over the back of the right hand from the wrist bone to the fingertips, and then the palm of the right hand over the back of the left hand from the wrist bone to the fingertips.

Step 4: Repeat Step 1.

Step 5: Repeat Step 3.
Note: this step is recommended precaution as per Āyatullāh Sistani and obligatory precaution as per Āyatullāh Khamenei



Activity 2.2b: Make a Tayammum Kit

It is useful to have a tayammum kit ready for those emergency situations where we cannot use water. You will need the following to make your tayammum bag:

- A small pouch that is easy to access
- Ṭāhir sand, earth, or stones large enough to strike with the palms

Try to keep this pouch handy in your room or in your bag in case you may need it in an emergency.

Activity 2.2c: Review Questions

1. Which of the following is the correct order of washing the body during ghusl?
   a. Washing the head and neck, then the right side of the body, then the left
   b. Washing the left side of the body, then the right, then the head and neck
   c. The order does not matter

2. On which day of the week is it most mustaḥab to perform ghusl?
   a. Friday
   b. Thursday
   c. Sunday

3. When touching the name Allah (swt) in English, wuḍūʾ is necessary:
   a. True
   b. False

4. What can be used to perform tayammum?
   a. Mud
   b. Dry soil
   c. Grass

5. When performing tayammum, wipe the face:
   a. From the hairline to the bridge of the nose
   b. From the cheeks to the chin
   c. Entirely

6. For ghusl tartībī:
   a. I can only wash from top to bottom
   b. I can interrupt my ghusl and continue where I left off
   c. I can keep nail polish on my toes

7. The water used for wuḍūʾ must be:
   a. Pure (muṭlaq)
   b. Ṭāhir
   c. Both a & b

FLASHBACK! METHOD OF PERFORMING WUḌŪʾ

1. **Make an intention:** Before performing wuḍūʾ, one must make the intention that they are performing wuḍūʾ to become closer to Allah (swt) or out of obedience to Him. It does not require saying anything out loud. It is enough just to know why you are doing wuḍūʾ.
2. **Mustaḥab actions:** The first three actions of wuḍūʾ are mustaḥab.
   - Washing the hands
   - Rinsing the mouth three times
   - Istinshāq (taking water up into the nostrils) three times
3. **Wājib actions:** The next six steps are wājib.
   - Washing the face
   - Washing the right arm
   - Washing the left arm
   - Wiping the top of the head
   - Wiping the right foot
   - Wiping the left foot

In these steps, there is a difference between the parts that are **washed** and the parts that are **wiped**. The parts that are washed—your face and arms—can be wet before you do wuḍūʾ. The parts that are wiped—your head and feet—must be dry before you begin, and you cannot take new water from the sink or anywhere else to wipe them. In some cases, like if your hands have dried by the time you get to your head, you can take water from your eyebrows or beard (for people who have one) to wipe the head and feet. In every step, make sure to use your hands to wipe each part of the body, not the other way around!

Tip: It is good to close the tap after you use the water for each part so that you do not waste water. The Prophet (ṣ) used to use very little water for wuḍūʾ. After you finish washing the left arm, be careful that you do not get any new water from the tap on the part of your hands that will do the wiping, because masḥ (wiping) of your head and feet cannot be done with new water.

washing the

FACE

- **Before you wash:** face does *not* have to be dry
- **Fill** water in your hand[1]
- **Pour** it on your face to wash from where hair grows to the end of the chin covering the width of your middle finger to your thumb
- **Direction** of washing should be from top to bottom and not in reverse

MUSTAḤABĀT Washing once is wājib, washing twice is mustaḥab/permissible. Washing more than two times makes your wuḍūʾ bāṭil (invalid).

EXTRA TIP!

Wash a little bit of the inside corner of the eyes, the inside of your nose, and inside the edges of your lips to make sure the water has reached.

washing the right and left

ARMS

- **Before you wash:** arms do *not* have to be dry
- **Fill** water in your hand[1]
- **Pour** it on your right arm to wash from above the elbows to tips of the fingers
- **Don't forget** to wash in between the fingers as well
- **Repeat** for the left arm

Keep your arm still while your hand moves across it

MUSTAḤABĀT Washing once is wājib, washing twice is mustaḥab/permissible. Washing more than two times makes your wuḍūʾ bāṭil (invalid).

It is mustaḥab for girls to start washing from the inner side of the arm and for boys to start washing from the outer side of the arm (from the elbow).

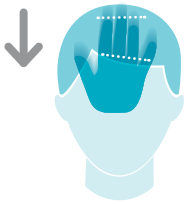
EXTRA TIP!

How to calculate the number of washes:

You can use multiple handfuls of water to accomplish a complete wash of the arms, but once all the parts of the arms have been completely washed, any other water that you pour onto it will count as the next wash (wash number 2).[2]

wiping the top of the

HEAD



- **Before you wipe:** *must* be dry
- **Do not** take new water. Use the same water that is on your hands from washing your left arm.
- **Wipe** the top section of your head[3] with your right hand from back to front without going past the hairline.

Keep your head still while your hand moves across it

MUSTAḤABĀT Wiping just a little is enough even with one finger, but it is mustaḥab to wipe with fingers flat the length of one finger, and the width of three joined fingers.

EXTRA TIP!

When wiping the head, stop before you reach your face, so that the water on the face does not mix with the water on your hand. But if you do end up touching your face, make sure to use other parts of your hand for wiping your feet.

wiping the right and left

FEET

- **Before you wipe:** *must* be dry
- **Do not** take new water. Use the same water that is on your hands from washing your left arm.
- **Wipe** your right foot with your right hand from the tip of the toes to the ankle.
- **Wipe** your left foot with your left hand in the same manner.

Keep your feet still while your hand moves across it

RECOMMENDATION Wiping of the feet can have any width, (half a finger, one finger, three fingers whole hand), as long as the length is wiped, but it is better that the width of the wiping should be three joined fingers, and it's still better that the wiping of the entire foot is done with the entire hand.

EXTRA TIP!

Sometimes, when we are performing wuḍūʾ, water falls on to our feet. We *must* dry our feet before wiping them.

1 You must fill your hand with water and then pour it to wash these areas, not just use a damp hand

2 Same applies for the face

3 The parting or roots of the hair or short hair on the top of the head

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Preliminaries to Prayer
3.2 Further Rules of Ṣalāh
3.3 Ṣalāh: Khushūʿ

3.1 Preliminaries to Prayer

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the five preliminary conditions necessary for ṣalāh: ṭahārah, qiblah, timing, place and clothing
- Contrast what one can and can not perform sujūd on
- Demonstrate the ability to accurately use a prayer calendar
- Analyze the importance of seeking permission for the place of prayer

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ):
Prayer is to religion as the head is to the body.

Ṣalāh is one of the most important obligations that Allah has ordained. It is a source of spiritual nourishment and means of gaining closeness to Him. However, before offering this very important act of worship, there are some preliminary conditions that must be met:

- **Ṭahārah:** We must be ṭāhir and in a state of wuḍūʾ in order to pray. We have discussed the details of this in previous lessons.
- **Qiblah:** We must face the direction of the qiblah.
- **Timing:** Prayer must be offered at the correct time.
- **Place:** Prayer and sujūd must be offered in an appropriate place.
- **Clothing:** The clothing worn while offering prayer must meet certain conditions.

Let's discuss some of the above conditions in more detail.

FACING THE QIBLAH

One of the preliminary conditions for ṣalāh being valid is the direction in which it is offered. All Muslims must face a certain direction while praying, which is known as the **qiblah**. Physically, the qiblah is the Holy Kaʿbah in Mecca, and wherever Muslims are, they must find the direction of the Kaʿbah and face it while praying. Today, we have some very easy methods for finding the direction of the qiblah, such as:

- Downloading an application on our smartphones that will find the qiblah based on our location
- Using a special qiblah compass, or any other means that gives us conviction that we are praying in the right direction

If we are unable to use any of these tools to determine the direction of the qiblah, this does not mean that we should delay offering our prayers. Instead, we should pray in the direction that the qiblah most likely lies in. And if we have no idea, then we proceed in accordance with the ruling of our marjaʿ:

- Āyatullāh Sistani: Pray in any one direction. It is a recommended precaution to pray in all four directions.
- Āyatullāh Khamenei: Pray in all four directions out of obligatory precaution, if time allows, or if time is limited, then in any one direction.

THE TIME OF PRAYER

The times at which one must offer ṣalāh have been established by Allah. Think of prayer as a checkpoint. As we go about our daily lives, we become very occupied, and at times, we may become oblivious of Allah, the Exalted. As a result, we may also become unaware of whether or not He is pleased with our actions. Therefore, prayer becomes wājib at certain points throughout the day to remind us of our purpose, give us a chance to recalibrate, and help us reflect on our actions. If we were to pray only whenever we felt like it, there would no longer be any mandatory checkpoint to help us reflect on our actions and fix them.

It is important for us to be cognizant of when the times for prayer are and do our best to pray exactly on time. Once, Imāmʿ Alī (ʿa), in the middle of a battle, paused amongst all of the fighting and looked at the sky. Many of the companions were puzzled by this and asked what he was doing. The Imām (ʿa) informed them that he was checking whether the time of the prayer had arrived.

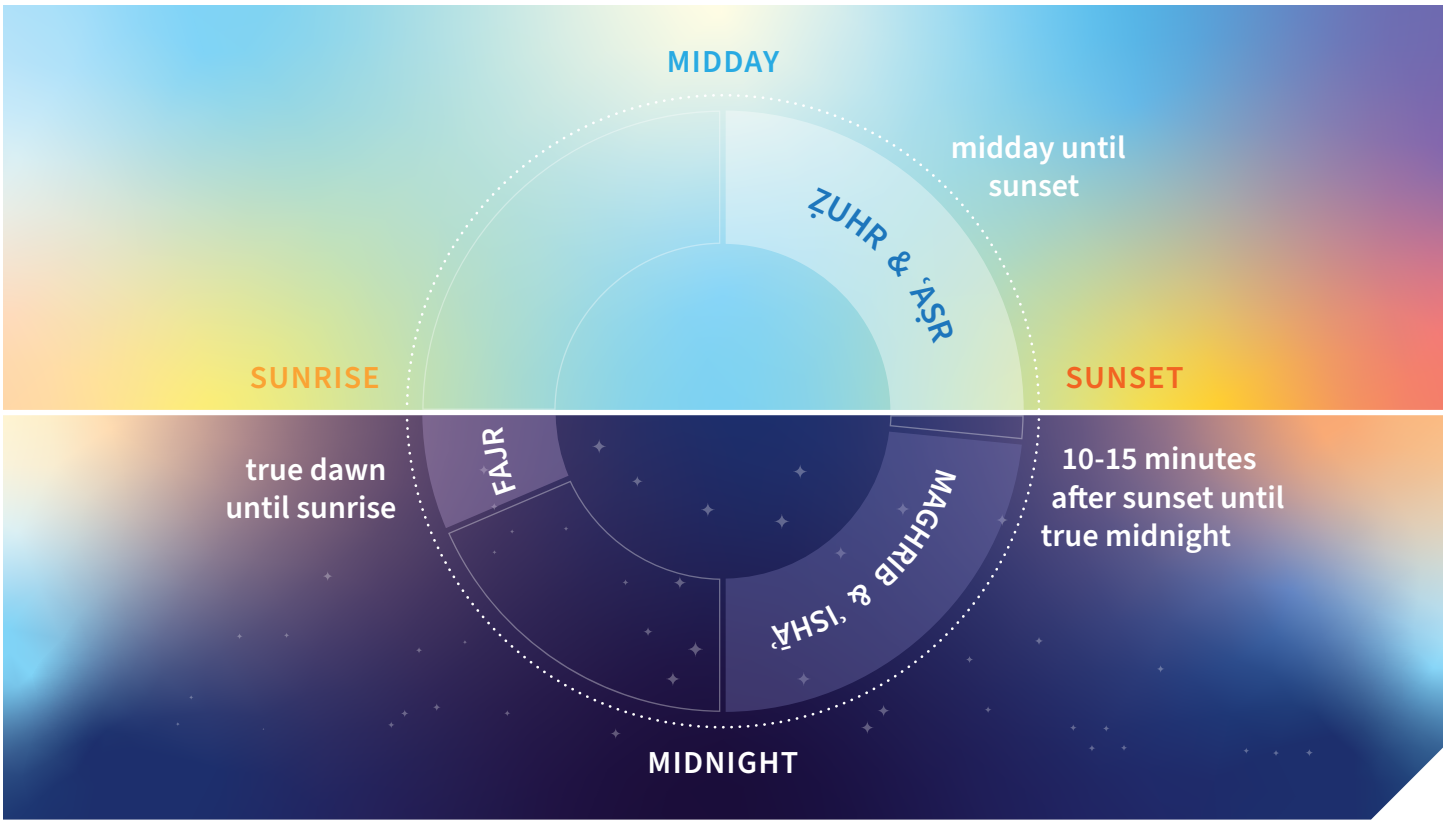
The companions of Imām Husayn (ʿa) did the same thing in the midst of the battle of Karbala. In fact, some companions of Imām Husayn (ʿa) were martyred in Karbala while protecting those who were offering their prayers at the correct time.

Through these instances, we learn the importance of praying on time and not neglecting our prayers even in the most difficult circumstances.

Now that we know it is extremely important for us to offer our prayers on time, we must know the times for each prayer.

- Fajr: from the start of true dawn until sunrise
- Ẓuhr and ʿAṣr: prayers: from midday—when the sun is directly overhead in the sky and then starts to decline (halfway between sunrise and sunset)—until sunset
- Maghrib and ʿIshāʾ: from Maghrib, which is about 10-15 minutes after sunset (when more than half the sky is dark) until true midnight (halfway between sunset and dawn)

We can refer to a local prayer calendar or ṣalāh timing app prepared by reliable sources and endorsed by people of knowledge to find out the exact timings for each prayer. Remember that in large cities, times can vary by a number of minutes when you go from one end to the other. We should make sure we are aware of all of the correct times to ensure that we offer each prayer on time.



Activity 3.1a: What Time Is It?

Below is an example of a prayer calendar for a particular city. Take a look at the calendar and answer the following questions:

1. On August 30, what time is the Maghrib ṣalāh? _____

2. On August 23, what time is the Fajr ṣalāh qaḍāʾ? _____

3. On August 25, what time is the Dhuhr ṣalāh ? _____

4. BONUS QUESTION: On August 28, what's the latest time that the ʿIshāʾ ṣalāh should be offered? ʾ?

_____

Ramaḍān	August	Fajr (FASTING BEGINS)	Sunrise	Dhuhr (NOON PRAYERS)	Sunset	Maghrib (FASTING ENDS)
1	22	5:02	6:26	11:58	17:31	17:51
2	23	5:01	6:25	11:58	17:32	17:52
3	24	5:00	6:23	11:58	17:32	17:53
4	25	4:59	6:22	11:57	17:33	17:53
5	26	4:58	6:21	11:57	17:34	17:54
6	27	4:56	6:20	11:57	17:34	17:55
7	28	4:55	6:18	11:56	17:35	17:55
8	29	4:54	6:17	11:56	17:36	17:56
9	30	4:53	6:16	11:56	17:36	17:57

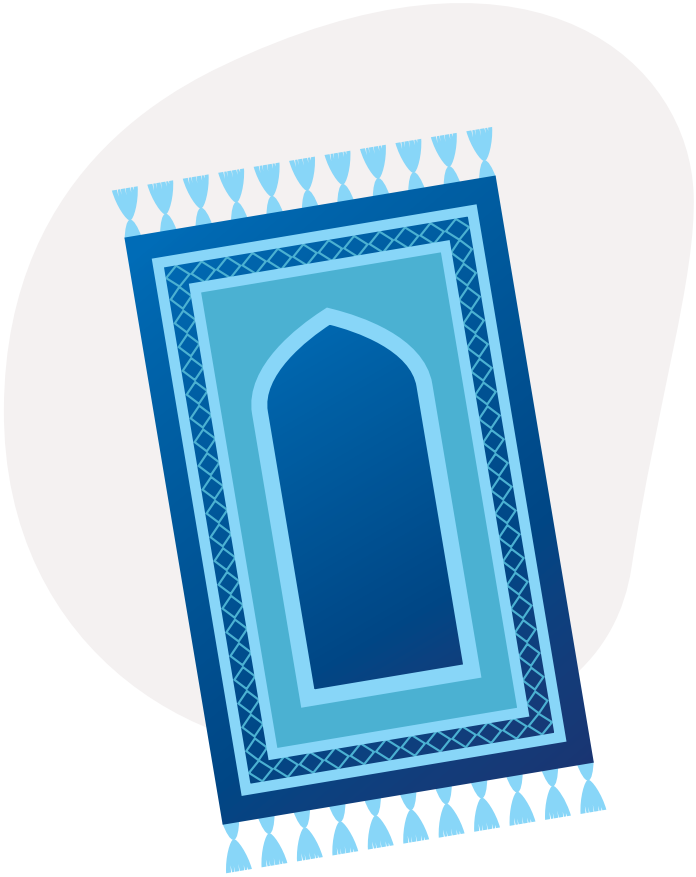
Qaḍāʾ Prayers

Missing one of the daily prayers *deliberately* is forbidden and a major sin. We must do our best to ensure that we pray on time. If someone does miss their prayer, regardless of the reason, they need to ask forgiveness from Allah (swt) and make up this prayer at a later time. This is called offering a **qaḍā**ʾ prayer. For example, if it is night time, and for some reason I missed my ʿAṣr prayer today, I need to pray it now to make up for the missed prayer. If for some reason we do not get a chance to make up our qaḍāʾ prayer the same day, then we should have a special place where we can keep track of our qaḍāʾ prayers and continuously work to make up all our prayers as soon as possible.

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Tawbah تَوْبَة repenting (us), relenting (God)

- Arabic Root Word: ت و ب t-w-b
- Root Meaning: to turn
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 87
- Related Words: التَّوَّاب - at-Tawwāb - the oft-returning, the Acceptor of Repentance
- Reference: Noble Qurʾān, 4:17



THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND PROSTRATION

Allah has made the whole earth a place for worship. We can pray in most places, and the place we are in should not cause us to delay or miss our prayers. However, the environment in which we pray is important and affects the spirituality we feel during prayer. This is why there are certain rules when it comes to the place in which we are praying:

1. We must own or have permission to use the place where we are praying. If one prays somewhere where they are not allowed to be, then their prayer is not valid.
2. The place of prayer should not be najis and wet. If it is both najis and wet, this would make one's clothes and body najis, thereby voiding their prayer. However, if the place is najis and dry, one can still pray there. Regardless, the place where one's forehead is placed in sujūd must be ṭāhir, even if it is dry.
3. If a man and a woman are praying in the same area:
   - **a)** According to Ayatullah Sistani, the woman should pray behind the man. However, if there is a barrier between them then it is okay for them to pray side by side or for the woman to pray in front. If there is no barrier, if they are more than 4.5 meters (5 yards) apart, the man doesn't have to be in front.
   - **b)** According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, the two should be more than a handspan apart, and the man doesn't have to be in front.

Both of these rulings are according to iḥtiyāṭ wājib.

4. The place of prayer must be steady. For example, one cannot pray on a rocking boat. However, it is permissible to pray on a plane if the necessary rules are observed.
5. The place where one performs sujūd should be roughly leveled with where they are standing. Therefore, we cannot pray on very steep hills or steps.

CLASS DISCUSSION: What could be some reasons for Allah's (swt) wisdom behind seeking permission to use a space for ṣalāh? Why can't we assume that this earth belongs to Allah (swt) and so we can pray anywhere?

The Place of Sujūd

The object on which we perform sujūd must meet certain conditions. The most important conditions to remember are:

1. It cannot be made of something that can be eaten or worn
2. It must come from the earth (e.g., leaves, paper grown from trees, etc.)

Some common objects on which we can prostrate are:

1. Solid clay, which is normally called a **turbah**. The preferred clay is from the grave of Imām Ḥusayn.
2. A piece of wood that has not been coated with a substance that will be a barrier
3. Grass and non-edible leaves
4. Paper can also be used, especially if none of the above are available

The Rewards of Praying in a Masjid

Both attending and praying in the masjid are extremely rewarding acts. The masjid is the "house of Allah," and attending the masjid shows that we are respecting His house and showing our submission. The following narrations show just how much reward there is in these actions:

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ):
Whoever walks to the masjid with the intention of praying in congregation gets the equivalent of 70,000 good deeds for every step they take, and they are raised as many levels…[1]

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): "O Abū Dharr, for as long as you are sitting in the masjid, for every breath you take, Allah grants you an extra level in Paradise, the angels ask for blessings for you, 10 good deeds are recorded for you, and 10 bad deeds are erased."[2]

1 *Mizanul Hikmah*, No. 8302
2 *Mizanul Hikmah*, No. 8303

THE CLOTHING FOR PRAYER

When we are going to pray, we should make sure that we dress appropriately. The clothes we wear during prayer must:

Be ṭāhir

The clothes should also not be made of the parts of a predatory animal or an animal that has not been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law

Be mubāḥ

This means we must own or have permission to wear them

Sufficiently cover the body

For women, this means covering the entire body except the face and hands. The feet need to be covered only if a non-Maḥram is present.

For men, this means covering the private parts, and it is better to cover as much of the body as possible

Not be made of gold or pure silk

if you are a man (at all times, not just during prayer)

Act One!

Get in groups of three and create a short skit on your assigned scenario. Be sure to include the problem, the solution and a little bit of humor! Present your skit to the class and vote on the best one! (Pssst, you can even look up more specific rulings on your marjaʿs website for extra points)

SCENARIO 1	Muhammad and his family visit a restaurant for dinner. Just as the time for ṣalāh approaches, Muhammad takes a stroll down the hallway and finds a storage closet. He thinks to himself, *This place is quiet and suitable for ṣalāh*. Can Muhammad pray in the closet, or does he need to ask permission from the restaurant staff?
SCENARIO 2	Just as Muhammad is about to offer his prayers, he notices that there are some drops of blood on his prayer mat. He must have cut his foot and not noticed. Can he still pray on the prayer mat, or does he need to clean the blood first?
SCENARIO 3	Muhammad also notices a large amount of dried blood on his foot and pants. What should he do before starting his ṣalāh?
SCENARIO 4	Ahmad and his friends go camping in the mountains and set up their tents just before nightfall. It is now time for Maghrib prayers, and everyone prepares themselves for prayers. The campsite is not flat, but rather very uneven and steep. Ahmad tries to recall what he learned in class regarding steep slopes and prayer, but he cannot remember. Can you help him?
SCENARIO 5	Ali is part of his school soccer team and is playing an indoor game on synthetic turf. Ali usually carries his turbah with him, but he forgot to bring it with him this time. It is time for ṣalāh, and he is looking for something to pray on. Ali has the following options and needs your help choosing what to pray on: **A.** Pray on the turf, as it's just like grass **B.** Pray on the wooden basketball court, which is "treated" wood **C.** Grab a leaf from a tree nearby and prostrate on the leaf
SCENARIO 6	Zahra is staying over at her cousin Zainab's house. It is time for ṣalāh. She opens her cousin's wardrobe to borrow a prayer dress covering for ṣalāh. What should she do before wearing the scarf?

Activity 3.1b: Act One Worksheet

Once you are assigned your skit, read through your scenario and fill out this worksheet before meeting with your group.

Scenario #_____

1. What is the question/problem?

2. What is the answer/solution? Make sure to include how you came to this answer

3. Brainstorm some ideas for presenting this problem and solution to your class

4. Where can you go to find the specific answer from your marja?

Activity 3.1c: Act One Worksheet (During skits)

After each group presents their skit, take 2 minutes to fill out the problem and solution that was presented. If you still have questions about the problem or solution, write it at the end of the worksheet for your teacher.

SCENARIO # 1

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 2

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 3

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 4

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 5

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 6

Problem	Solution

Questions I still have:

3.2 Further Rules of Ṣalāh

OBJECTIVES:

- Distinguish between the rukn (foundational), ghayr rukn (obligatory but non-foundational), and mustaḥab acts of ṣalāh?
- Understand the sanctity of performing ṣalāh correctly
- Distinguish between intentional and unintentional additions and how to rectify them
- Establish the importance of and the rules of using the turbah correctly

RUKN: foundational

GHAYR RUKN: obligatory but non-foundational

In previous years, we learned how to perform the obligatory daily prayers. Today, we will learn about the **rukn** (foundational) and **ghayr (non) rukn** (obligatory but non-foundational) acts of ṣalāh.

OBLIGATORY ACTS OF ṢALĀH

As we have previously learned, there are 11 obligatory acts and conditions in prayers. These 11 obligatory acts and conditions are divided into two categories:

11 Obligatory Acts and Conditions of Ṣalah

5 RUKN:	6 GHAYR (NON) RUKN:
Intention	Qirāʾah
Takbīrat ul-Iḥrām	Tashahhud
Qiyām	Dhikr
Rukūʿ	Taslīm
Two Sujūd	Tartīb
	Muwālāt

ADDING ACTIONS

Any addition made to the foundational (rukn) acts, whether intentionally or unintentionally, will make the prayers void. Some examples include:

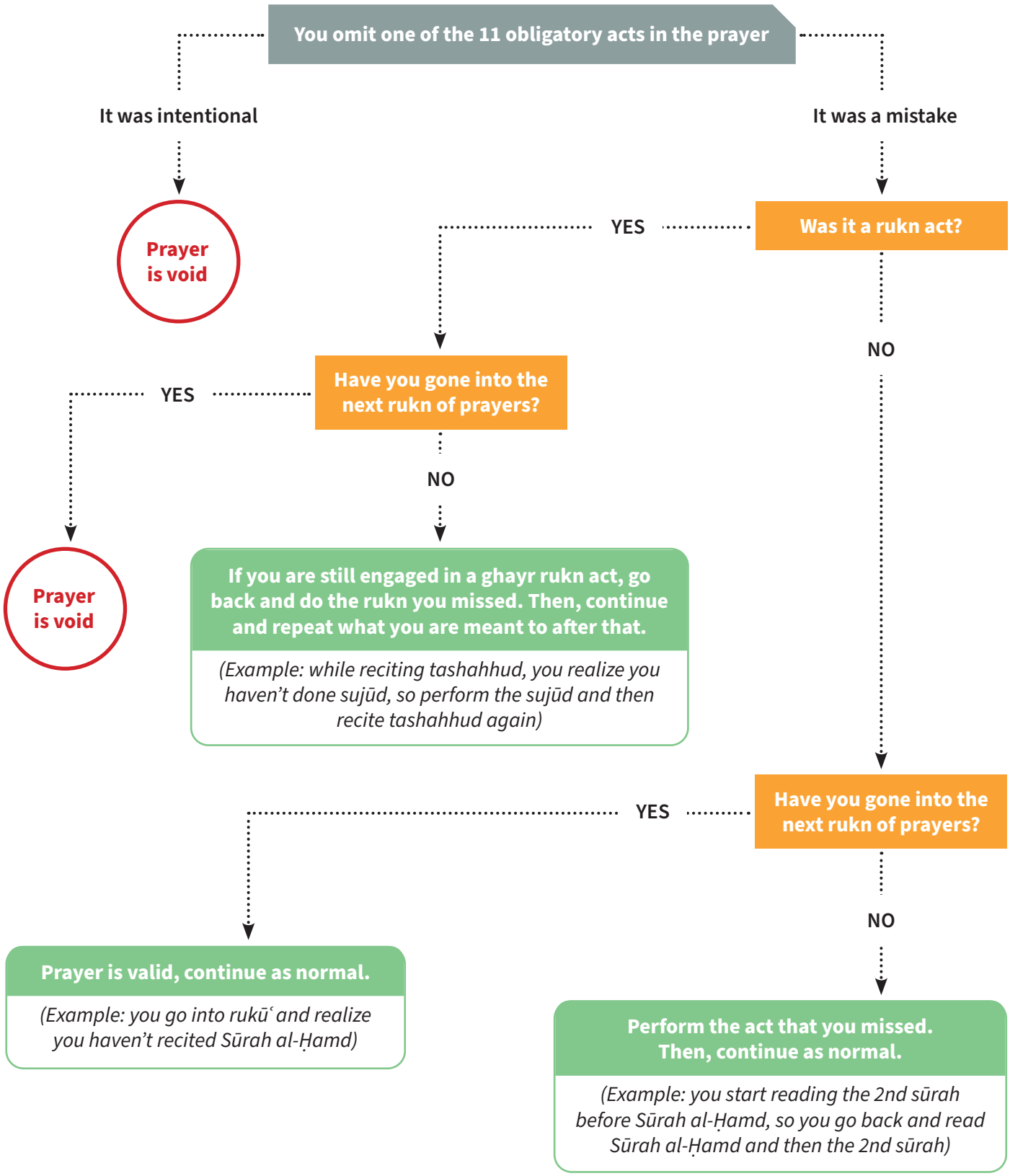
- Reciting takbīrat ul-iḥrām twice with the intention of both being obligatory
- Performing four-rakaʿāt in a three-rakaʿāt prayer
- Performing four sujūd in one rakʿah
- Performing two rukūʿ in one rakʿah

If a non-rukn act is added intentionally, the prayer is void. However, if it is added unintentionally, the prayer can be rectified by performing sajdah as-sahw (discussed in the next lesson).

THINK ALOUD: Why do you think making additions to ṣalāh invalidates it? Can you think of something else in your life that cannot be changed at all and the impact the slightest change would have on it?

OMITTING OBLIGATORY ACTIONS

What happens if you omit one of the obligatory acts of ṣalāh? Look at the flowchart below to see the rules for missing one of these acts.


You omit one of the 11 obligatory acts in the prayer
It was intentional
It was a mistake
Prayer is void
YES
Was it a rukn act?
NO
Have you gone into the next rukn of prayers?
YES
NO
Prayer is void
If you are still engaged in a ghayr rukn act, go back and do the rukn you missed. Then, continue and repeat what you are meant to after that.
(Example: while reciting tashahhud, you realize you haven't done sujūd, so perform the sujūd and then recite tashahhud again)
YES
Have you gone into the next rukn of prayers?
NO
Prayer is valid, continue as normal.
(Example: you go into rukūʿ and realize you haven't recited Sūrah al-Ḥamd)
Perform the act that you missed. Then, continue as normal.
(Example: you start reading the 2nd sūrah before Sūrah al-Ḥamd, so you go back and read Sūrah al-Ḥamd and then the 2nd sūrah)

Activity 3.2a: Void or Valid

Determine if the following actions within ṣalāh have made it void or if it is still valid. Circle your answer.

1. You are doing ʿIshāʾ ṣalāh but only completed 3 rakaʿāt.	**VOID**	**VALID**
2. In the middle of tashahhud, you realize you haven't completed both sujūd so you go back to complete the missed one.	**VOID**	**VALID**
3. To try and improve the quality of your prayer, you intentionally repeat the rukū.	**VOID**	**VALID**
4. You unintentionally forgot to do tashahhud in your second rakʿah and realized after you've started your third rakʿah.	**VOID**	**VALID**
5. You realize you've forgotten to do rukūʿ but are already in sujūd.	**VOID**	**VALID**
6. You accidentally recite the dhikr for sujūd in rukūʿ and realize before you stand up so you recite the correct dhikr before standing up from rukūʿ.	**VOID**	**VALID**

7. Are there any scenarios you have that still confuse you about whether they make your ṣalāh void?

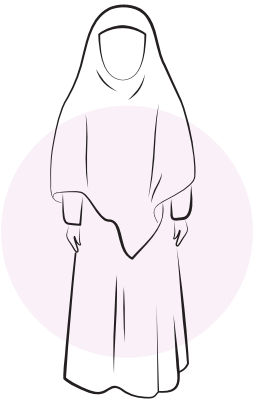
8. Once you've completed the above table independently, discuss your answers with a partner. Together, come up with two new scenarios - one that makes your ṣalāh void and one that maintains its validity.

	VOID	**VALID**
	VOID	**VALID**

TAKBĪRATUL-IḤRĀM AND QIYĀM

In the position of qiyām, it is mustaḥab to stand with one's hands on the thighs, fingers together, looking at the place of sujūd, with feet apart a distance between three spread-apart fingers to one hand span for men or with feet together for women.

It is mustaḥab to raise the hands parallel to the face (or even further back and parallel to the ears) when reciting takbīr throughout the prayer, and especially when reciting takbīrat ul-iḥrām. It is better to pause after saying takbīrat ul-iḥrām (enough to refresh the breath) before proceeding to qirāʾah.

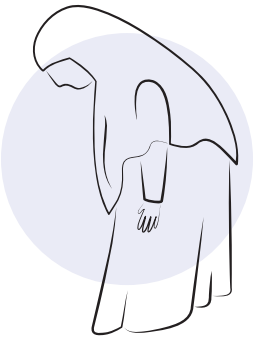


QIRĀʾAH

It is mustaḥab to recite "Aʿūdhu billāhi min ash-shayṭānir-rajīm" before beginning the recitation of the sūrahs. It is also recommended to pause between each āyah of the sūrah. After completing Sūrah al-Ḥamd, it is mustaḥab to say, "Alḥamdulillāhi rabbil-ʿālamīn". Intentionally saying "Āmīn" at the end of Sūrah al-Ḥamd makes the prayer void!

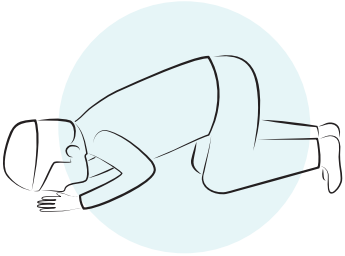
RUKŪʿ

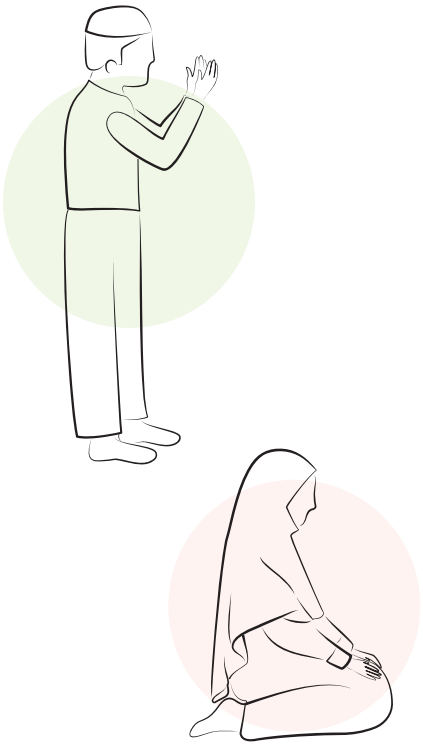
It is mustaḥab for a man to bend to an extent that he is able to keep the palms (with fingers open) on his knees. Other mustaḥab guidelines for the rukūʿ include: a man's legs should be straight (not bent), his back should be flat, and he should stretch forth his neck and keep it in line with his back. In this position, he should look between his two feet and say the dhikr. For women, it is mustaḥab to slightly bend the knees and place the hands on the thighs (with fingers together) a little above the knees. After standing up from rukūʿ, it is mustaḥab to say "SamiʿaAllāhu li man ḥamidah."



SUJŪD

When going into sujūd, it is mustaḥab for a man to place his hands on the ground before his knees. For women, it is mustaḥab to put the knees on the ground before the hands. It is mustaḥab for men to only place the palms of the hands on the ground (next to their head) and have the elbows up in the air (i.e., not leaning on anything) during sujūd. However, it is mustaḥab for women to put their entire arms (up to the elbow) on the ground. It is also mustaḥab to say "Astaghfirullāha rabbī wa atūbu ilayh" when sitting between the two sajdah. It is mustaḥab to say "Biḥawlil-lāhi wa quwwatihi aqūmu wa aqʿud" while rising to stand after sujūd.





QUNŪT

It is mustaḥab to place one's hands in front of the face, opening upwards toward the sky. It is also mustaḥab to look at the palms while reciting the qunūt. The duʿā of qunūt can be anything in any language but according to some Mārajiʿ at least a portion of it should be in Arabic in order to fulfill the conditions of being a qunūt.

TASHAHHUD AND TASLĪM

Before saying the tashahhud, it is mustaḥab to say "Alḥamdulillāh." It is mustaḥab to look at one's lap during tashahhud. In taslīm, it is mustaḥab to say "As-salāmu ʿalayka ayyuhan-nabiyyu wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh." Then, saying both "As-salāmu ʿalaynā wa ʿalā ʿibādil-lāhiṣ-ṣāliḥīn" and "As-salāmu ʿalaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh" is mustaḥab, but one should at least say the latter of the two in ("As-salāmu ʿalaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh") in order to complete the prayer..

It is highly recommended to recite the tasbīḥ of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa). Our great scholars encourage reciting the ziyārah of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) regularly and one of the best times to do so is after completing the prayers.

REFLECTION: Write a dua you make commonly or one you would like to make in qunūt.

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ṢALĀH

Below are some common questions that issues that may come up related to ṣalāh.

Using Turbahs with Engravings

These can be used, but it is better to place the forehead on the flat (non-engraved) part of the turbah. If using the engraved part of the turbah, we need to be careful that the necessary amount of the forehead is still covered in doing sajdah.

Playing with Turbahs

It is important to show respect to the turbah because of the sanctity it has due its relation to Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) or the other Imāms. Therefore, actions like throwing a turbah, tossing it from one hand to another, deliberately putting it in a dirty place, or purposely stepping on it should be avoided.

Placing a Turbah with the Name of Allah or the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) Face Down

We need to avoid disrespecting these holy names. If placing them face down on the ground is considered disrespectful, then we should not do this. This may depend on what type of surface the turbah is being placed on.

Using Turbahs that Count the Number of Sujūd

You may see people use a turbah that is embedded in a counter that counts the number of sujūd. People use this to reduce their doubts about the number of rakaʿāt they have prayed. This is okay as long as the turbah is designed in a way that once the forehead presses down on it, it is firm and not a moving surface.

Closing One's Eyes During Ṣalāh

It is makrūh, but not ḥarām, to close one's eyes during ṣalāh. Therefore, it is better to avoid it, but it can be done as a temporary means of training oneself to concentrate during ṣalāh.

REFLECTION: When you picture or hold a turbah, what comes to mind immediately? What do you picture?

Complete the following analogy:

A turbah is as significant to ṣalāh as _____ is as significant to _____ .

Practical Demonstration of Salāh

Identify the wājib and mustaḥab acts in the video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BLTF7Tcc0k

Activity 3.2b: Create a Poster

Learning and putting into practice all of the mustaḥab rulings of ṣalāh can sometimes be confusing. Create a poster that will help you remember the mustaḥabbāt to put in a place where it will be a daily reminder to you. You can create the poster digitally or by hand, whichever you are more comfortable with.

Within your poster be sure to include:

- Graphics/Drawings to help understand the actions
- Differentiate between mustaḥab acts for men and women where applicable.
- Any other details that will help *you* make your ṣalāh stronger, inshāʾAllāh.

Activity 3.2c: Review Worksheet

TRUE OR FALSE: State whether the below statements are true or false and provide a clarification or correction statement.
EXAMPLE: *Reciting qunūt in the second rakʿāt with the dua completely in Arabic is wajib.*
False. Qunūt is a mustaḥab *act that can be omitted. When it is recited, duʿā can be made in any language but a portion should be in Arabic.*

1. Omitting a rukn act of ṣalāh does not void the ṣalāh if done unintentionally.

2. Closing one's eyes during ṣalāh is highly recommended for concentration.

3. It is mustaḥab to recite "Aʿūdhu billāhi min ash-shayṭānir-rajīm" before beginning the recitation of the sūrahs.

4. Whether a non-rukn act of ṣalāh is added intentionally or not, it makes the ṣalāh void.

5. Placing a turbah with engravings face up for sujūd makes our ṣalāh void.

MATCHING: Match the correct mustaḥab actions with the wājib rukn.

6. Reciting "Aʿūdhu billāhi min ash-shayṭānir-rajīm" before reciting surahs in this ghayr rukn.	●	●	**A. TWO SUJŪD**
7. It is mustaḥab to say "Astaghfirullāha rabbī wa atūbu ilayh" when sitting after the first part of this rukn.	●	●	**B. QIRĀʾAH**
8. It is mustaḥab to say "Alḥamdulillāh" and to look at one's lap during this rukn.	●	●	**C. RUKŪʿ**
9. It is mustaḥab to raise the hands parallel to the face or ears when reciting takbīr throughout the prayer, and especially when performing this rukn.	●	●	**D. TASHAHHUD**
10. After standing up from this rukn, it is mustaḥab to say "Samiʿal-llāhu li-man ḥamidah."	●	●	**E. TAKBĪRAT UL-IḤRĀM**

11. Now that you've learned the mustaḥab aspects of ṣalāh, analyze one of the prayers offered by your local Imam, a teacher, parent, or someone else whom you admire. For each action of the prayer, list out all the mustaḥab things they do. Why do you think they do them?

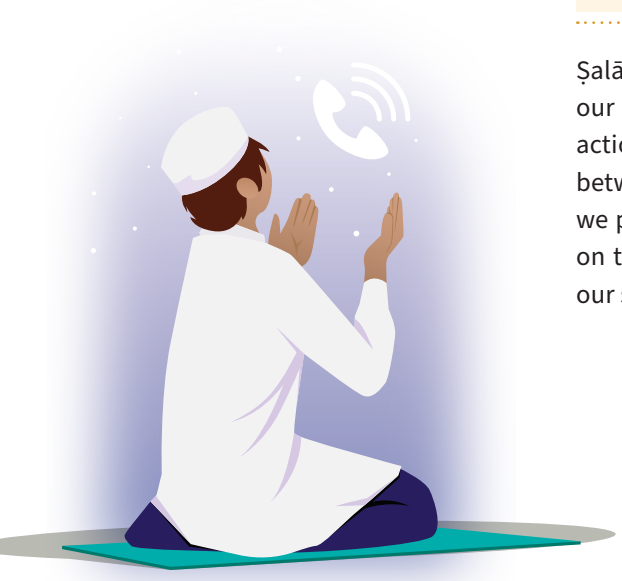
3.3 Ṣalāh: Khushūʿ

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the significance of whom we are speaking to in ṣalāh
- Identify our internal and external state (khushūʿ and khudū) during ṣalāh
- Examine some of the objectives of ṣalāh
- Establish an action plan to increase our khushūʿ and khudūʿ in ṣalāh

KHUSHŪʿ:
internal humility

KHUḌŪʿ:
external humility



ṢALĀH: A MEETING WITH THE KING OF ALL KINGS!

Imagine that you are given a once in a lifetime opportunity to have a private meeting with a very powerful, kind, and generous king. The king sends you a special invitation card that addresses you by your name and lists the details of the meeting—the exact time and the address of the palace. The king also tells you to bring along a written list of all your requests so that he can grant them for you, as well as a list of your concerns, so that he can ease those concerns.

Wouldn't this be the best offer you have ever received in your life? Wouldn't you feel excited and honored to meet this king and have a one-on-one chat with him? You would probably want to go shopping to buy some nice, new clothes. And, you would definitely make sure to look clean and presentable. Of course, you would arrive at the palace on time and be on your best behavior in front of the king.

Well, Allah (swt) has offered us something even greater and more special than a meeting with an ordinary human king. Allah (swt), the King of all kings, the All-Kind, All-Generous, and All-Powerful Creator of the worlds has given us a very special opportunity to meet with Him and talk to him five times every single day—the five daily prayers! In these prayers, we are given the incredible chance to ask from Allah (swt) whatever we want and for help in solving all our problems. And there's more! These meetings come with a guarantee that all our wishes (which are good for us) will be granted, and all our worries and fears will be removed from us! Allah (swt) makes this promise in the Qurʿān when He says:

> "Call on Me; I will answer you"[1]

Ṣalāh is the most important obligation in Islam. It is one of the main ways of achieving our purpose of getting closer to Allah (swt) and reaching our perfection. Ṣalāh is an action we perform every day for the sake of Allah (swt), and is a form of communication between us and our Creator. In this lesson, we will be reflecting on the reasons why we pray and the wisdom for the form of prayer stipulated in Islam. We are reflecting on these questions to help us achieve humbleness and attentiveness when offering our ṣalāh.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ghāfir, 40:60

THE IMPORTANCE OF ṢALĀH IN THE NOBLE QUR'ĀN AND ḤADĪTH

The importance of ṣalāh is stressed throughout the Noble Qur'ān. The word "ṣalāh" is mentioned 67 times in the Noble Qur'ān. This is just one indication of how important this act is in the eyes of Allah (swt). When the Qur'ān describes the believers, it often lists ṣalāh as the first practical sign of a believer:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ۝ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ۝

Successful indeed are the believers,
who are humble in their prayers[2]

The importance of ṣalāh is further emphasized in the ḥadīth of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), who have stated that ṣalāh is a pillar of our religion. Many ḥadīth use the analogy of religion as being a tent, with ṣalāh being the post or pole that holds up the tent. If the pole is not looked after and falls, then the entire tent falls.[3]

Our ḥadīth also emphasize that there is no action that takes precedence over prayer. For example, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said:

There is no action better in the eyes of Allah (swt) than ṣalāh. Therefore, one must not let any worldly thing stop them from performing the ṣalāh at its prime time. Allah (swt) condemns the one who is negligent of his ṣalāh. Know that Allah (swt) does not accept anything except that which is performed with sincerity.

Even during the most intense battles, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) stopped to pray when it was time for ṣalāh. Even on the battlefield of Karbala, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his companions stopped to pray, even as they were being showered with arrows! Some of the companions of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) died while offering their prayers or protecting the Imām and the other companions as they prayed.

2 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Muʿminūn, 23:1-2

3 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10546-10550

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Ṣalāh صَلاة (a specific method of praying to Allah prescribed in Islam)

- Arabic Root Word: ص ل و ṣ-l-w
- Root Meaning: supplication, invocation
- Related Words: مُصَلّى - *muṣalla* - a place of prayer
  *Note: adding a م to the beginning of an Arabic root word can turn the word into a "place of" or "state of"
- Reference: Noble Qur'ān, 2:125

KHUSHŪʿ AND KHUḌŪʿ (HUMBLENESS AND ATTENTION) IN ṢALĀH

Now, when we are going to meet the King of kings, we should enter that meeting with the right demeanor. This means giving the meeting our utmost attention, and approaching Him in a state of humility. After all, we are meeting the All-Powerful, the All-Great! Here, there are two types of humility we should be observing: khushūʿ (internal humility) and khuḍūʿ (external humility). Khushūʿ is when a person's heart and thoughts are humble and focused on Allah (swt). This is a direct result of understanding the greatness and power of Allah (swt). Khuḍūʿ refers to the humbleness of our external body in front of Allah (swt); this is seen through performing the set actions of ṣalāh, such as rukūʿ and sujūd, in a correct manner.

REFLECT: Many of us know the importance of ṣalāh. However, we often find it difficult to concentrate and pay attention during our ṣalāh. What might be some reasons why we find it hard to concentrate during our ṣalāh?

ATTENTION DURING ṢALĀH

We have learnt that ṣalāh is the most important action in our daily lives and has great rewards. However, our ṣalāh is only accepted and brings about reward to the degree of how much attention we pay to Allah (swt) and our status before Him during ṣalāh. As we saw in the second āyah we discussed in this lesson, the believers who are praised are those who are humble in their prayers and who are aware they are standing in front of Allah (swt).

When we offer our physical ṣalāh, our fiqhi responsibility is complete and written for us. However, when we offer.??" that ṣalāh without any khushūʿ we aren't able to benefit from the connection and closeness to Allah (swt) that we hope to attain. Ḥadīths confirm that only those parts of prayer during which our attention is present and we are humble towards Allah (swt) are truly accepted with the effect that the prayer should have on our hearts and soul. The parts where we are not paying attention or even thinking about our position before Allah (swt) are not accepted.

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said:

> A person will pray, but only a sixth or a tenth of it will be written (as reward) for him. Only that which he was present and aware will be written for him.[1]

This means we should try to focus and concentrate on our conversation with Allah (swt) during our ṣalāh in order to truly benefit from the prayer as Allah (swt) intended for us.

One strategy that might help us improve our attention during ṣalāh is to reduce any physical distractions during ṣalāh. It is important to pray at a place and time where we are not distracted. For example, praying somewhere where we can hear a TV or where we can hear our friends talking will distract us from ṣalāh. Where possible, we should try to pray in a place which is reasonably quiet and where distractions are minimised. It is highly recommended to have a regular place to pray within our home. This place becomes blessed and in fact glorifies Allah (swt) along with us as we pray.

TRY THIS AT HOME:

One of the most important ways of remembering Allah (swt) in our prayer is to remember Him outside of prayer as well. Try for a few days to begin every action with bismillāh, and end with saying alḥamdulillāh. Don't just say it, but mean it as well! Then see whether it's easier to remember Allah (swt) when you are in your prayer.

THE WISDOMS BEHIND ṢALĀH

We may often wonder about some of the aspects of the ṣalāh we offer as Muslims. We may see that other religions do not have a prayer that is prescribed in terms of its time or form. Or if they do, we may observe that it is not practised by many followers of that religion and is not given as much importance as the daily ṣalāh is given in Islam. We may have noticed that in shared places of worship such as prayer rooms in universities, hospitals and similar public places, it is usually mostly Muslims who attend for ṣalāh.

1 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 3626

3.3a: Reflection Activity

What is some of the possible wisdom behind ṣalāh in Islam in the way that it is prescribed by Allah (swt) and the way we practice it? Why does it have set times? Why does it have to be offered so often? Why does it have specific prescribed actions like standing, bowing and prostrating?

The daily ṣalāh prescribed in Islam is unique. It has set times with set actions and is obligated five times per day. In order to reach a higher level of perfection, we are required to do things exactly as they are prescribed. For example, when coding, if you are missing one bracket, the code will not function as intended and will not give you the desired result. Similarly, we are required to pray in a very specific manner in order to reach higher levels of closeness to Allah (swt). When we take time to reflect on this, we come to appreciate that this is in fact one of the great blessings that Allah (swt) has granted us. If our daily ṣalāh was not obligatory and did not have set times and set actions, we would most likely not pray at all or pray very infrequently. This would lead us to become forgetful of Allah (swt) and the religion of Islam. Our journey towards reaching our perfection would be very much jeopardized and we would lose out on the worldly and spiritual benefits of ṣalāh. If there wasn't one set way to pray, we wouldn't be able to easily pray together, and reap the benefits of coming together as a community to serve Allah!

While the main reason that we pray is that Allah (swt) has commanded and prescribed it, we also see that the Ahl al-Bayt have given us insights into some of the wisdom behind ṣalāh and its form. Reflecting and appreciating the unique form of the Muslim prayer and its benefits may help us achieve more humbleness and better attentiveness during ṣalāh.

Jigsaw!

Each student will receive one ḥadīth to read and reflect on for 5 minutes.

- **5 minutes:** Read your ḥadīth and write down 1 or 2 points of reflection and 1 question that arises for you
- **3 minutes:** Find all the other students in your class with the same ḥadīth - this is now your expert group! Once you are in your group, each student will have one role: Discussion leader, recorder (takes notes), researcher (goes through everyone's notes and summarizes) and presenter
- 15 minutes: With your expert group, reread the ḥadīth and discuss ideas, thoughts and questions. As a group, come up with 3 key points the presenter can share with the class in order to teach them about your ḥadīth.

Ḥadīth #1

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ʿa): "Ṣalāh reaffirms sincerity and purifies from arrogance."[5]

Ḥadīth #2

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) was asked about the wisdom behind ṣalāh when it causes people to become physically tired and occupies them from their needs. In response, he said, "It has reasons. If people were left without any note or reminder of the message of the Prophet (ṣ)...they would have been misled like those before them were misled….Allah (swt) wanted to not let them forget the religion of Muḥammad (ṣ) so He made ṣalāh obligatory upon them. They remember five times a day…"[6]

Ḥadīth #3

Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā (ʿa): "...it contains a regular remembrance of Allah (swt) in the day and the night. This is so the servant does not forget his Master and Cherisher and Creator...The remembrance of his Creator and standing before Him bar him from sinning and prevent him from different types of corruption."[7]

5 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10572
6 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10576
7 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10577

3.3b: Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #1

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ʿa): "Ṣalāh reaffirms sincerity and purifies from arrogance."[8]

8 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10572

3.3c: Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #2

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) was asked about the wisdom behind ṣalāh when it causes people to become physically tired and occupies them from their needs. In response, he said: "It has reasons. If people were left without any note or reminder of the message of the Prophet (ṣ)...they would have been misled like those before them were misled….Allah (swt) wanted to not let them forget the religion of Muḥammad (ṣ) so He made ṣalāh obligatory upon them. They remember five times a day…"[9]

9 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10576

3.3d: Jigsaw Student Handout - Ḥadīth #3

Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā (ʿa): "...it contains a regular remembrance of Allah (swt) in the day and the night. This is so the servant does not forget his Master and Cherisher and Creator...The remembrance of His Creator and standing before Him bar him from sinning and prevent him from different types of corruption."[10]

10 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10577

3.3e: Action Plan

The best way to make a change is to make a plan! Brainstorm three steps you want to implement today to increase the presence of your heart in ṣalāh. One step should focus on your body, the second should focus on your mind and the third should focus on your heart.

Oh Allah (swt), help me to increase my khushūʿ in ṣalāh in order to reach nearness to You (qurbatan ilallāh). InshāʾAllāh I plan to:

Prepare my body for ṣalāh by:

Remove distractions from my mind by:

Turn my heart towards Allah (swt) by:

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Fasting

4.2 Charity

4.1 Fasting

OBJECTIVES:

- Examine the different levels of fasting
- Recognize the many physical and spiritual benefits of fasting
- Identify what invalidates the fast

AL-MARZŪQ:
full of sustenance

MIḌMĀR:
a special training period for a great competition

THE MONTH OF RAMAḌĀN

The month of Ramaḍān is a very holy and special month in Islam. In it, we have the honor of fasting in obedience to Allah (swt) and gaining the treasure of self-control and self-restraint for the sake of Allah (taqwā). The month of Ramaḍān is full of blessings and mercy.

During the lifetime of the Prophet (ṣ), the blessed month of Ramaḍān was given the title of **al-Marzūq** (full of sustenance) due to the abundance of the blessings of Allah (swt) during this month. It is also known as a **Miḍmār**, meaning a special training period for a great competition. The month of Ramaḍān is also a catalyst for burning away sins, changing bad habits, and learning good habits. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said:

> The month of Ramaḍān was named so because it tends to burn (yarmiḍu) sins.

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

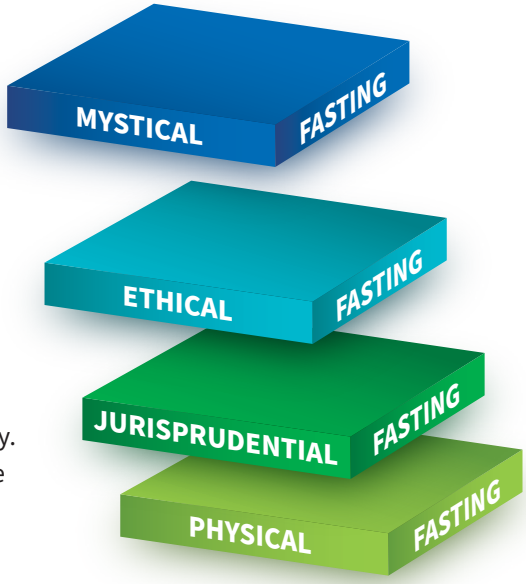
Ramaḍān رمضان (The 9th month of the Islamic calendar)

- Arabic Root Word: ر م ض r-m-ḍ
- Root Meaning: Intense heat; scorching; burning
- Occurrences in the Noble Qur'ān: 1
- Reference: Noble Qur'ān, 2:185

LET'S BRAINSTORM! Brainstorm reasons for how the meaning of the word *Ramaḍān* relates to the holy month of Ramaḍān.

LEVELS OF FASTING

As we fast from food and water during the month of Ramaḍān, all our organs should also join in by fasting from all sins. Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said, "When you fast, let your hearing and vision abstain with you from anything unlawful and everything ugly, leave hypocrisy aside, and do not harm those who serve you. Rather, adorn yourself with the dignity of the fast, and do not make your fasting day the same as the day when you do not fast."[1]



This ḥadīth hints at the idea that there are different levels of fasting:

1. **Physical Fasting:** This is like keeping a diet and includes practices like intermittent fasting. There are no benefits in the hereafter for doing this unless someone has the intention of fasting this way to keep their body healthy because it is a trust from Allah (swt) and so they can serve Allah (swt) better.
2. **Jurisprudential Fasting:** This is the fasting prescribed by the laws of Islam, in which one avoids certain things from dawn till Maghrib.
3. **Ethical Fasting:** This is to not only avoid the things that break the fast from a jurisprudential point of view, but also avoiding sins with all organs of the body. We should make it our aim at the beginning of every Ramaḍān that our fast be not just a jurisprudential fast, but also an ethical fast.
4. **Mystical Fasting:** This is the highest form of fasting where one abstains from everything other than being in the presence of Allah (swt).

THINK ALOUD: What are some practical things we can do to achieve the ethical level of fasting?

In addition to fasting, because of the special rewards in the holy month of Ramaḍān, there are a few additional actions that are highly recommended and highly rewarding to do, such as:

- Reciting the Noble Qurʾān more often
- Worshipping (e.g., reciting mustaḥāb prayers, duʿās, etc.), especially during the nights
- Avoiding all forms of sins (e.g., swearing, being rude to parents etc.)
- Spending more time at Islamic centers and masājid and in the company of pious people
- Avoiding wasting time

1 *Biḥār ul-Anwār*, V. 94, P. 351

Activity 4.1a: Ethical Fasting Worksheet

In an effort to prepare for the holy month of Ramaḍān, Fatima makes a list of common sins committed by body parts that she aims to avoid. Help her fill out her chart:

BODY PART	COMMON SINS	ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS
Eyes		
Ears		
Mouth	Backbiting	Defend the person who is being discussed/change the topic/leave the conversation
Stomach	Overeating	
Brain/Thoughts		

BENEFITS OF FASTING

The action of fasting has many benefits for us. We will look at some of them here.

1. Taqwā

Taqwā is being conscious and careful of our duty toward Allah (swt) and protecting ourselves against those things that harm our souls. One of the main benefits of fasting, according to the Qurʾān, is that it helps us attain taqwā. When we are fasting, we are controlling some of our biggest desires, such as hunger and thirst. We cannot live without food and water, and they are precious to us. In this special month, however, we train ourselves to keep away temporarily from that which we love. This action trains our souls to keep away from what is forbidden to us.

2. Self Building

Most of us find it very difficult to change our bad habits. The holy month of Ramaḍān is a great opportunity to make positive changes in our lives and daily routines. When we fast, our eating, drinking, and sleeping habits already change, so it can be a great catalyst for making other positive changes in our life.

3. Health Benefits

The Prophet (ṣ) has said, "Fast, and you will be healthy." There is a lot of medical literature that confirms the physical health benefits of fasting. Especially in recent years, we have come to learn more of the benefits of fasting, and it has recently become a health trend. While this should not be the sole intention for fasting, it is definitely one of the benefits of fasting.

4. Sharing and Caring

Imām Ḥasan Al-ʿAskarī (ʿa) explained one of the wisdoms behind fasting: "So that the rich person may feel the pain of hunger and, due to this, be compassionate to the poor."[2]

When fasting, we begin to become aware of some of the possible extravagances in our consumption and feel the suffering of others. This should hopefully help us to change our spending habits and try to help others who are in need.

THE INTENTION TO FAST

Fasting means that one abstains from certain actions—which will be mentioned later—from the time of Fajr prayer (dawn) until Maghrib. An important part of fasting is making the intention to fast. Before we fast, we have to know in our minds that we are keeping an obligatory fast for the month of Ramaḍān, and that we are doing this in obedience to Allah (swt).

The time for the intention of the obligatory fast is specific. We can make the intention at two possible times:

1. Before the beginning of Fajr on every morning that we are fasting
2. At the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān, when we make the intention to fast for every day of the upcoming month

The way that we know that the month of Ramaḍān has started is by sighting the crescent moon of the month of Ramaḍān the night before, or when 30 days of the month of Shaʿbān have passed. We determine the end of the month of Ramaḍān and the day of Eid by sighting the crescent moon of the month of Shawwāl or when 30 days of the month of Ramaḍān have passed.

2 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, Ḥadīth #10915

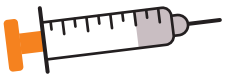
INVALIDATORS OF THE FAST

There are certain acts that invalidate or break our fast. The table below lists some actions we come across commonly in our everyday lives.

✗ FAST IS INVALID ✓ FAST IS VALID

ACTION	ON PURPOSE	ON ACCIDENT	NOTES
Eating or drinking	✗	✓	If you accidentally swallow food particles that remain between the teeth, the fast is valid, but if you do so on purpose, your fast will be invalid.
Brushing your teeth	✓	✓	Do not swallow any external water, the toothpaste, or saliva that has been mixed with the toothpaste
Rinsing mouth with water	✓	✓	Do not swallow water deliberately
Inhalers	✓	✓	
Using eye drops, ear drops, or nose sprays	✓	✓	It is not permissible to apply medicine or to put water or any other substance through the nose if you know the substance will reach the throat. If it reaches the throat, the fast will be invalid. Āyatullāh Khamenei: It is makrūh to apply medicine through the nose (e.g. nasal sprays) when fasting.
Throwing up	✗	✓	Intentionally vomiting (for example, if someone has a queasy stomach and they make themselves cough in order to vomit), their fasting becomes invalid. Also, stomach acid or food that comes up when belching should not be swallowed intentionally.
Inhaling thick smoke	✗ (according to iḥtiyāṭ wājib)	✓	Examples of thick smoke: • Smoke from cigarettes or tobacco • Smoke from a fire or from the exhaust of a truck We are allowed to inhale steam, but if it condenses in the mouth and turns into water, and you swallow it on purpose, your fast is invalid
Swallowing thick dust	✗ (according to iḥtiyāṭ wājib)	✗	An example of thick dust is dusty air from sweeping a dusty ground. If the dust reaches the throat, it breaks the fast. Allowing thin dust in the air to reach the throat does not invalidate the fast. If thick dust is whipped up by the wind, and a person notices it, but is not careful to avoid it, allowing the dust to reach their throat, their fast becomes void on the basis of obligatory precaution.
Attributing a lie to Allah (swt) or the Maʿṣūmīn	✗ (according to iḥtiyāṭ wājib)	✓	If you want to quote aḥadīth or Qurʾān, be accurate and give the reference. If you're not sure, report it in such a way that it is not directly attributed to the Prophet (ṣ) or the Imāms (ʿa). For example, quotes attributed to the Prophet (ṣ) or the Imāms (ʿa) on social media are sometimes inaccurate and often do not include a reference. Be careful of forwarding / reposting these quotes, especially when fasting.

Here are the rulings on some actions that vary according to marājiʿ:

ACTION	ĀYATULLĀH SISTANI	ĀYATULLĀH KHAMENEI
Swallowing phlegm/ mucus that comes up into your mouth	It is okay to swallow it if it has not entered the cavity of the mouth. If it has entered the cavity of the mouth, the recommended precaution is not to swallow it.	It is okay to swallow it if it has not entered the cavity of the mouth. If it has entered the cavity of the mouth and you intentionally swallow it, your fast is invalid.
Submerging your head underwater	It is severely makrūh and iḥtiyāṭ mustaḥab to avoid.	According to iḥtiyāṭ wājib, the fast is invalid if someone intentionally submerges their entire head under water when fasting. *NOTE: This rule does not apply to showering.* *This rule does apply to swimming, unless one can manage to make sure their entire head does not go under water at any one time. Therefore, swimming while fasting is not advisable*
Injections 	Injections and IV drips do not invalidate the fast.	The fast is valid if it is injected into the muscles and is for treatment or preventative purposes (not for nutrition). Intravenous injections (injected into the veins) that are for nutritional purposes invalidate the fast.

INDIVIDUALS EXEMPT FROM FASTING

In certain situations, some people may be exempt from fasting:

- Someone who has a condition in which fasting would significantly harm their health *(One of the ways of knowing whether fasting is harmful for a person's health is if it is confirmed by a qualified health professional and the person is satisfied by this opinion)*
- A pregnant woman who is approaching the time of her delivery, if fasting is harmful for her or her unborn child
- A person who finds it impossible or excessively difficult to fast due to old age
- A traveler who is traveling out of town a certain distance (approx 28 miles / 44 km. roundtrip) from the border of their hometown, if certain other conditions are met

FASTING AND SICKNESS

The laws that Allah (swt) sets for us are out of His mercy. They are not meant to cause us intolerable difficulty or harm. Therefore, there are exceptions for fasting if someone is sick:

- If one knows or has a reasonable fear that they will get sick or be harmed by fasting, they should not fast, and in fact, their fast would be invalid.[3]
- If one is sick and knows or has a reasonable fear that fasting will (1) make them more sick, (2) increase their pain, or (3) delay their recovery, then they should not fast, and if they do fast, their fast will not be valid.
- If one is sick, but fasting is not harmful to their health, their fast will be valid.

Sickness doesn't include normally acceptable or bearable levels of hunger, thirst, weariness, headaches, and other difficulties that go away within a couple of hours after iftār. Such things are normally considered tolerable by rational people.

MISSED FASTS

If a person misses a fast due to a valid reason, such as illness or travel, they need to make up that fast. Making up a missed fast is done with the intention of qaḍāʾ. In some cases, in addition to the qaḍāʾ (for example, if they didn't make the qaḍā before the next Ramaḍān), one must also pay a tax called **fidyah** (feeding a poor believer 750g of food staple for each missed day).

If someone misses a fast without a valid reason, they must make up that fast and offer a **kaffārah**, which is a penalty that we will learn about later.

3 A doctor's opinion can be the source of the fear of harm/sickness, but if one is certain that fasting won't cause them any harm despite what the doctor says, they must fast.

Activity 4.1b: Review Questions

1. Ethical fasting refers to:
   a. Avoiding sins with all organs of our body during the month of Ramaḍān
   b. Being nice to people during the month of Ramaḍān
   c. Going on an intermittent fasting diet during the month of Ramaḍān

2. We must make the intention to fast:
   a. On the day we are fasting
   b. Before we begin fasting
   c. Anytime we want

3. Reciting the Noble Qurʾān:
   a. Is highly recommended during the month of Ramaḍān
   b. Is the same as reciting any other time of the year
   c. Is not recommended during the month of Ramaḍān

4. Brushing your teeth without swallowing anything is:
   a. Not allowed when fasting
   b. Allowed when one is fasting

5. If a person is walking somewhere and the wind blows up a thick dust, the person:
   a. Has no obligation to cover their mouth or avoid the dust
   b. Should cover their mouth and avoid the dust to keep their fast in order
   c. Should cough

6. Hasan is a muqallīd of Āyatullāh Khamenei. He has swimming class during the holy month of Ramaḍān, he must:
   a. Avoid swimming all together
   b. Can swim as long as he does not submerge his head (though it's better for him not to swim)
   c. Can swim as per usual

7. Sukaina is getting a slight headache near the end of fast, but still thinks she can make it to the end of the fast:
   a. She must continue her fast
   b. She can break her fast if she would like to
   c. She should ask her parents if she should finish the fast or not

8. Husayn is taking a day trip to see his sister downtown in the month of Ramaḍān. His home is within the city limits but is more than a 28 mile round-trip from downtown. Is Husayn's fast valid?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4.2 Charity

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and investigate the connection between ṣalāh and zakāh
- Define zakāh as meaning purification and as the general term used in the Qurʾān for being charitable
- Establish zakāh as a means of purification, a loan to Allah (swt), and trading with Allah (swt)
- Outline forms of charity such as education, helping others, and through wealth
- Define khums as literally meaning one-fifth and involving giving one-fifth (20%) of our savings as charity at the end of the year
- Compare the reward of meeting the needs of a fellow believer to the highest rewards in Islam and understand that benefiting others and removing harm from their path are also cosidered forms of charity.

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ

Say to My believing servants that they should establish the prayer and spend out of that which We have given them, secretly and openly, before the coming of the day in which there shall be no bartering nor mutual befriending.[1]

Being charitable is one of the most emphasized actions in Islam and an essential part of our religion. In the Noble Qurʾān, this act is usually paired with offering ṣalāh. When the Noble Qurʾān describes the believers, it usually mentions that they are "those who establish ṣalāh and give zakāh."

We also learn from the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) that charity has many benefits for us in our lives in this world and the next.

The Noble Prophet (ṣ) has said:

> Give charity, and cure your sick ones through the giving of charity. Surely, charity repels accidents and illnesses, and is a source of increasing your life spans and good deeds.[2]

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ibrāhīm, 14:31

2 *Kanz Ul-ʿUmmāl*, H. 16113

Activity 4.2a: Forms of Charity

What different forms of zakāh or charity can you think of? List as many as you can.

Activity 4.2b: Benefits of Ṣalāh and Zakāh

Why do you think Allah (swt) has chosen to pair ṣalāh with zakāh? What characteristics might each act instill in us? For example, zakāh might instill the trait of selflessness in an individual. Could ṣalāh do the same?

Besides personality and character benefits, what are some other life benefits that ṣalāh and zakāh offer and where do the benefits or traits overlap?

ZAKĀH

ZAKĀH AND ṢALĀH

ṢALĀH

ZAKĀH IN THE QUR'ĀN

Zakāh is the general term used in the Qur'ān for being charitable. Its literal meaning is purification. In original Arabic it was used to refer to the growth and nurturing of a tree or plant in the best way possible. The process of helping a plant grow in the best way often occurs through pruning or cutting away parts of a tree. Therefore we may learn from this that one of the ways of allowing our wealth and resources to grow in the best way is to give some of it away for the sake of Allah (swt). It may be that this term is used by Allah (swt) to teach us that, when we give some of our wealth for His sake, it helps the remaining wealth that stays with us grow in a good and pure way. The Noble Qur'ān describes charity in the following ways:

A Means of Purification

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا

Take charity from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby...[3]

A Loan to Allah (swt)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

Who is there that will offer to Allah a good loan so that He will double it for him? And he shall have an excellent reward.[4]

Even though Allah (swt) is the true Owner of everything we have, He still describes spending for His sake as a loan. We give this loan to Him, and He promises to return it to us many times over.

Trading with Allah (swt)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۝ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

O you who believe! Shall I show you a deal that will deliver you from a painful punishment? Have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the way of Allah with your selves and wealth. That is better for you, if you know.[5]

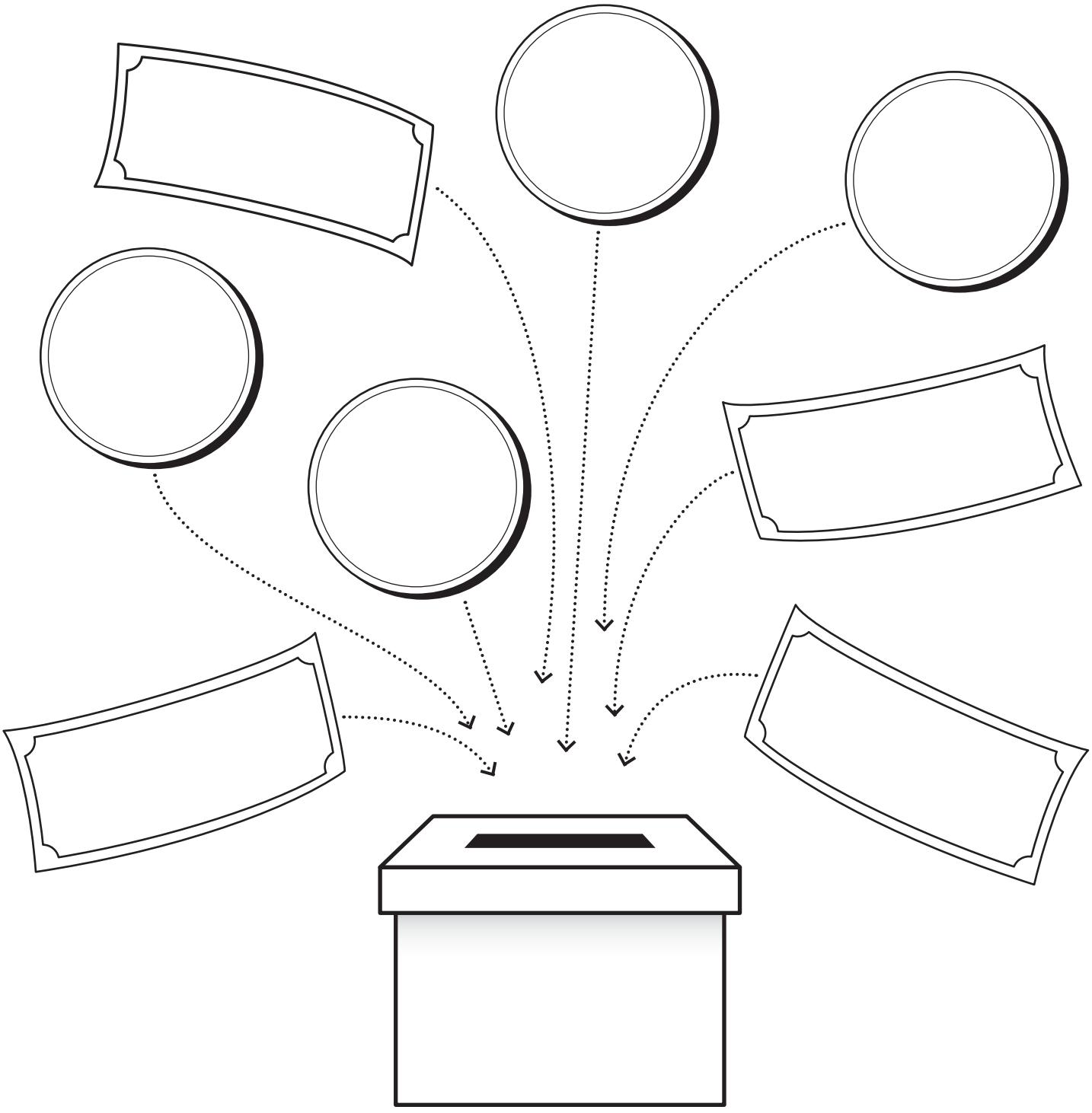
Allah (swt) describes spending in His way as an investment. When we invest with people, we hope to make a profit, but there is a chance we may lose out. However, when we invest with Allah (swt), He guarantees that we will earn great profits.

3 *Noble Qur'ān,* At-Tawbah, 9:103
4 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Ḥadīd, 57:11
5 *Noble Qur'ān,* Aṣ-Ṣaff, 61:10-11

Activity 4.2c: Spending for the Sake of Allah (swt)

In what ways is spending in the way of Allah (swt) a better way to invest your money than in worldly stock markets and investment banks? Using the graphic organizer below, brainstorm some benefits to striving towards wealth in the way of Allah (swt).

THE BENEFITS OF INVESTING WITH ALLAH (SWT)



FORMS OF CHARITY

Charity can take many forms, such as the ones mentioned below:

- **TIME/EFFORT:** using our time to help a person with a task
- **EDUCATION/SKILLS:** using our skills or talents to help someone who requires those specific skills or teaching them those skills to use in future
- **KINDNESS:** we can help a person by listening to them and responding with kind or helpful words
- **FINANCIAL**

Types of Financial Charity

MUSTAḤAB	**ṢADAQAH**
	GENERAL DONATIONS or other types of financial help, like spending on one's immediately family members or relatives (khayrāt / infāq)
WĀJIB	**KHUMS**
	ZAKĀH (specific meaning): A specified percentage (for example, 2.5% or 10% or 20%) given on certain items with certain conditions
	ZAKĀT AL-FIṬRAH: This is a wajib charity that must be given on the day of Eid al-Fiṭr by the breadwinner of the family for him/herself and each of his/her dependents
	NADHR /ʿAHD (Conditional Promise): When one makes a verbal promise between Allah and himself to give some charity under some conditions. The promise must meet some guidelines.
	QASAM (Oath): When one swears by Allah to give some charity
	KAFFĀRAH: A penalty that requires someone to spend from their wealth to feed the poor. Reasons for having to give Kaffārah include: • Missing fasts or breaking fasts in the month of Ramaḍān • Breaking one's oath / promise to Allah • Violating some conditions in Ḥajj

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

1. Was there a category of charity that surprised you? Why did you find it surprising?
2. How many types of charity have you taken part in already? What is one type of charity you would like to take part in soon and why did you choose this type?

KHUMS

Having briefly reviewed the different types of charity in Islam, we will now focus on khums, which is a particular type of obligatory fiscal charity that Muslims must pay. It is the most common type of charity that is wājib for believers to practice. Khums literally means one-fifth and involves giving one-fifth (20%) of our savings from a year as charity at the end of the year. A person who earns will have a date on which they calculate this type of charity. On this date, they should calculate how much money they have saved or invested in that year (i.e., money that was leftover after their ordinary expenses had been met). They should then pay 20% of this to a cause that is approved by their marjaʿ.

Khums has been expressly mentioned in the Noble Qurʾān and particularly emphasized by the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

> Know that whatever of a thing you acquire, a fifth of it is for Allah, for the Messenger, for the near relative, and the orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer….[6]

6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Anfāl, 8:41

Activity 4.2d: Critical Analysis

Answer the following questions in depth and with deep contemplation.

1. Why do you think there is so much emphasis in Islam on giving charity?

2. What are the benefits to those receiving charity?

3. What are the benefits to those giving charity?

4. When Allah (swt) declares that He will return a loan to us many times over or give us profit on our investment, what does this mean?

MEETING THE NEEDS OF BELIEVERS

As we discussed earlier, zakāh is not limited to financial donations. It can take many other forms. One of the other main forms of charity is to meet the needs of our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters using whatever means we can: our time, skills, talents, and words. This is one of the most rewarding actions that can be performed.

In a famous exchange between Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) and one of his companions during a Ḥajj trip, the Imām (ʿa) was explaining to his companion the rewards of each of the acts of Ḥajj. The companion was amazed by this and wondered at the great rewards of each action.

The Imām then asked, "Do you want me to teach you something that brings greater rewards?"

The companion replied, "Is there such an act?"

The Imām (ʿa) said, "Yes, fulfilling the need of a believer is better than one Ḥajj, and another Ḥajj and another Ḥajj…" until he counted 10 Ḥajj pilgrimages.

Here, the Imām (ʿa) was referring to a mustaḥab Ḥajj. After describing its great rewards, he then used the opportunity to teach us that as incredibly rewarding as Ḥajj is, meeting the needs of a fellow brother or sister is more rewarding than 10 mustaḥab Ḥajj trips.

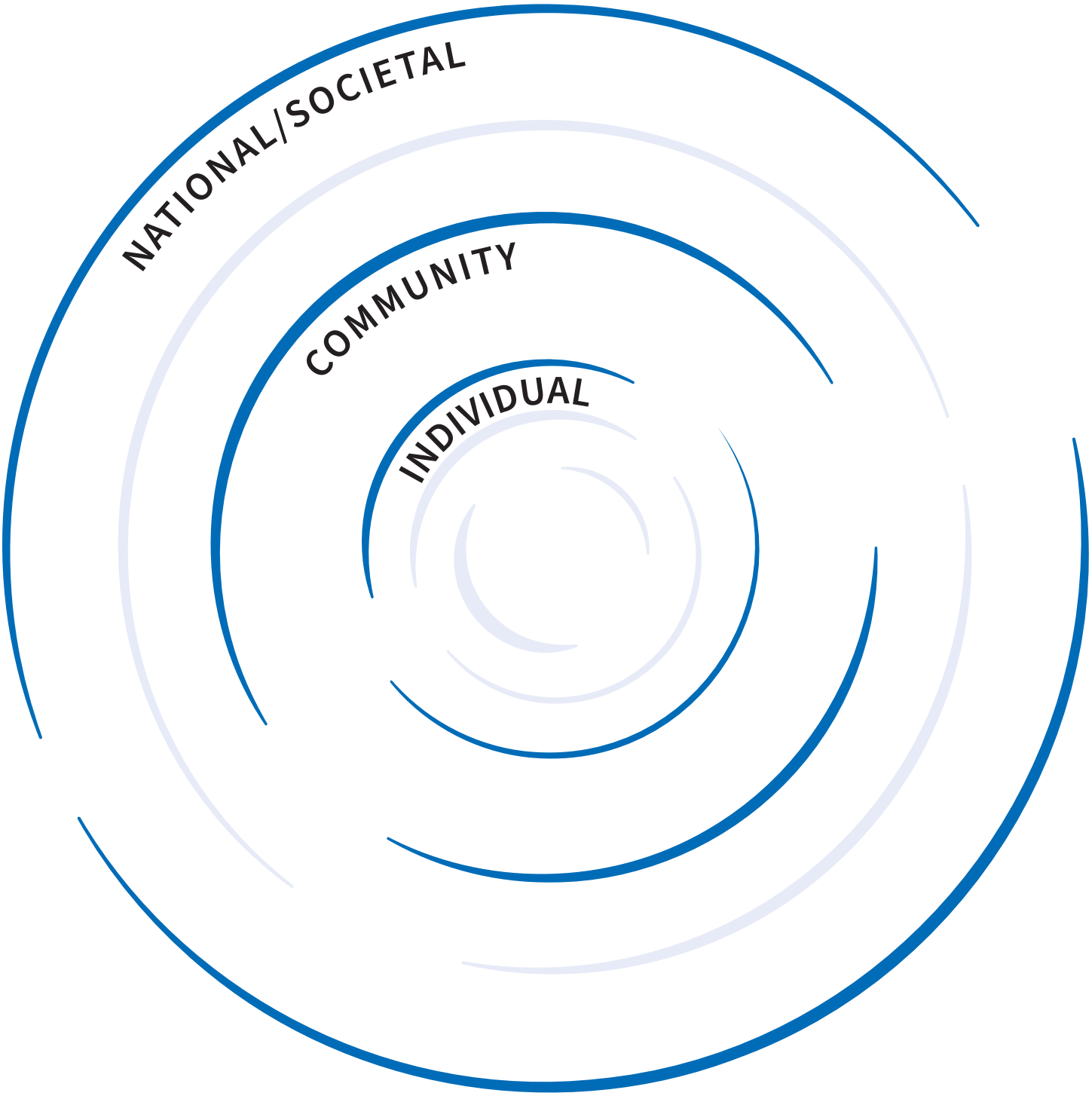
In another narration, the Prophet (ṣ) compares the reward of meeting the needs of a fellow believer to iʿtikāf. Iʿtikāf is a ritual in which one secludes themselves from the world by staying in a masjid and engaging in worship for at least three consecutive days. As you can imagine, this is a highly rewarding act! The Prophet (ṣ), however, has said:

> Walking with a brother to help them in their need is dearer to Allah than performing iʿtikāf in Masjid Al-Ḥarām (in Mecca) for two months.

IʿTIKĀF: a ritual in which one secludes themselves from the world by staying in a masjid and engaging in worship for at least three consecutive days

Activity 4.2e: A Ripple Effect of Social Benefits

Why is meeting the needs of fellow believers given such importance in Islam? What are the benefits of this act of charity on an individual, community, and national/societal scale?



BRINGING BENEFIT AND HAPPINESS TO PEOPLE

Another important form of charity in Islam is to bring about benefit to people. This extends even to simply bringing happiness to them through a kind word or gesture.

Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa): The Messenger of Allah (swt) said, "The creations are the dependents of Allah (swt). The most beloved of the servants of Allah (swt) is the one who brings the most benefit to his dependents and who brings happiness to a household."

REPELLING HARM FROM PEOPLE

Something as simple as removing harm from the path of people is considered a form of charity in Islam. Imām Ḥasan Al-ʿAskarī (ʿa) has quoted from the Prophet (ṣ), "Charity is obligatory upon every Muslim every day. When the Prophet (ṣ) said this, he was asked, 'Who can afford to pay charity every day?' He (ṣ) responded, 'Removing harm from the path of believers is charity.'"

A more advanced form of this type of charity is to reach a level of expertise in a field of science or technology that removes major harm from people. This may include things like researching a particular disease and finding a cure or prevention for it, or studying natural phenomena, such as fires or floods, and developing strategies for reducing the risk of harm from these natural phenomena.

It is narrated from Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) from his father Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa):

> The Messenger (ṣ) of Allah (swt) said, "Whoever repels from the Muslim community a flood or fire, Paradise becomes obligatory for them."

Activity 4.2f: Benefits & Harms Role-Playing

Providing benefits to or removing harms from the paths of people is considered an important form of charity in Islam. Working with partners or as part of a group, come up with a scenario in which a benefit is provided to another person. Then, think of a scenario where an act of charity is performed by removing harm from the path of people. Share your role-playing skits with the class.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Ḥijāb

5.2 Rules of Food and Drink

5.3 Music and Media

5.1 Ḥijāb

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify what ḥijāb is, physically and spiritually
- Determine when ḥijāb is necessary and upon whom
- Understand what it means to apply the rules of looking at maḥram vs non-maḥram
- Note: This lesson should be taught in a gender-separated classroom by a teacher of the same gender.

قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ۝
وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا
وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ ...

Tell the faithful men to cast down their looks and to guard their private parts. That is more decent for them. Allah is indeed well aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their private parts; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their chests and not display their beauty…[1]

WHAT IS ḤIJĀB?

The word **ḥijāb** literally means "barrier." A barrier is something that covers and protects something or someone. While a physical barrier protects a woman's honor and covers her beauty, it is also a means for both men and women to shield themselves from this world's false beauty.

WHY IS ḤIJĀB NECESSARY?

As Muslims, our goal is to reach perfection by following the commands of Allah (swt), the All-Wise. The rules of Islam are set for us by Allah (swt) so that we may achieve success in both this world and the hereafter. One of these commands is to observe ḥijāb. Part of reaching our perfection lies in redirecting our lust (shahwah) toward that which Allah (swt) has made permissible (ḥalal) for us.

The purpose of ḥijāb is to protect society from corruption and also protect ourselves from misdirected desires. It offers a means for men and women to interact in a safe environment on the basis of respect. Questions usually come up about the difference in dress code between that of men and women. The important thing to realize is that ḥijāb in itself is much more than a scarf on the head, or even a dress code. It is a set of guidelines and principles for the safety and progression of communities as a whole that leads to our perfection. The above āyahs clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of both men and women in establishing and maintaining an upright, God-conscious society free from harm against our own souls as well as the souls of others.

REFLECTION: What does it mean to maintain a God-conscious society? What can you do personally to help this purpose in your daily life?

1 *Noble Qur'ān,* An-Nūr, 24:30-31

WHEN DOES ḤIJĀB APPLY?

Most Muslims become familiar with the concept of ḥijāb from a very early age. However, in a society where ḥijāb is not widespread, the guidelines can become blurred. In this lesson, we will understand **when, how, and between whom** ḥijāb should be applied.

MAḤRAM AND NON-MAḤRAM

In Islam, people of the opposite gender are grouped into either our maḥram or non-maḥram counterparts. If two people of the opposite gender are maḥram to one another, it means they do not need to observe ḥijāb around each other. This is because their close relationship will prevent them from falling into sin. The table outlines people who are maḥram and non-maḥram to each other.

We must remember that although the people listed in the table are maḥram, private parts still need to be covered from others. And even in front of maḥrams, there is a certain level of modesty that needs to be observed. This includes being dressed appropriately, touching, and speech.

If a person does not fall into any of the categories mentioned in the table, they are non-maḥram, which means that special rules apply to looking, touching, and covering. Two non-maḥram people cannot touch or be alone with each other in a private place. A woman must also observe ḥijāb in front of any man who is not in one of the categories mentioned in the talbe. You may have noticed that cousins are *not* maḥram to each other, which means that once a girl reaches the age of bulūgh, she must observe the rules of ḥijāb with her cousins of the opposite gender.

MAḤRAM PEOPLE FOR WOMEN	MAḤRAM PEOPLE FOR MEN
All women	All men
Father	Mother
Sons	Daughters
Husband	Wife
Maternal and Paternal Uncles	Maternal and Paternal Aunts
Nephews	Nieces
Stepfather	Stepmother
Stepsons	Stepdaughters
Grandfathers, great grandfathers, etc.	Grandmothers, great grandmothers, etc.
Grandsons, great grandsons, etc	Granddaughters, great granddaughters, etc.
Husband's father, grandfathers, etc.	Wife's mother, grandmothers, etc.

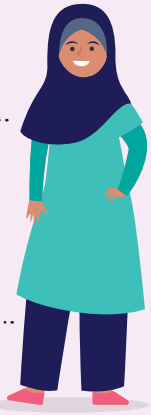
Activity 5.1a: Maḥram or Non-maḥram

Hanna has recently become bālighah and will now be observing ḥijāb. She still has some confusion about who is maḥram and non-maḥram to her. Help Hanna by answering her following concerns.

1. My older sister recently got married. Do I need to observe ḥijāb when her husband is around? **YES** **NO**
2. My cousin and I have grown up together, and he is literally like my brother. He is now 16 years old. Is he maḥram to me? **YES** **NO**
3. Can I remove my ḥijāb in front of my stepfather? **YES** **NO**
4. My youngest uncle (dad's brother) has just turned 17. When he comes over, will I need to observe ḥijāb? **YES** **NO**

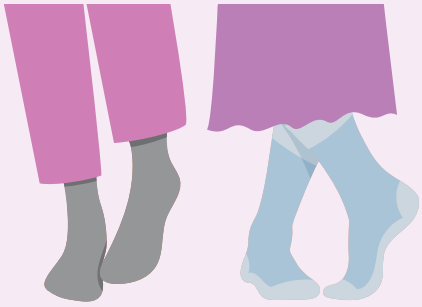
HIJĀB REQUIREMENTS FOR WOMEN

It is wājib for a woman to cover her entire body in front of non-maḥram men, except the face and hands up to the wrist. Additionally, the following guidelines should be observed:



Her clothes should be loose-fitting and cover the attractive shape and contours of the body

The hair, neck, and ears must be fully covered



Feet must be covered

- See-through socks are not permissible
- If no non-maḥram men are present during ṣalah, the feet do not have to be covered, nor do the clothes need to be loose-fitting. For example, pajamas or leggings can be worn as long as they cover the skin.

Adornment (Zīnah)

Ḥijāb is more than just wearing loose clothing. We also have to keep away from wearing things that are attractive. **Zīnah**, or adornments, are things that beautify you. For example, a sparkly golden necklace is meant to beautify and bring attention to you, which is why it would be considered zīnah. While it is permissible to wear such things when no non-maḥrams are around, it is ḥaram to display them in front of non-maḥram men, as doing so contradicts the principle of modest dress. The general principles to remember are that (a) one's clothes and accessories that are displayed to a non-maḥram should not be considered a zīnah, and (b) one's clothing and accessories should not be a source of attraction to non-maḥrams

One can use their own discretion to determine whether something is normally considered zīnah, although it must not contradict the principle mentioned above. If someone is not certain if a certain accessory is considered zīnah, then it is permissible to wear, but we must be honest with ourselves.

Examples of things that are normally considered zīnah: makeup, nail polish, nose rings, henna (mehndi), necklaces, and colored contacts.

THINK ALOUD: The above paragraph mentions being honest with ourselves. What might an honest conversation with yourself look like when considering if a certain accessory is normally considered a zīnah? What might be things to remember when reminding yourself why something is considered a zīnah?

Rules of Looking

In Islam, it is forbidden to look at someone, other than one's spouse, with a lustful intention. Lust means inappropriate attraction. This applies to both men and women. The Noble Qur'an specifically covers this issue for both men and women in the āyahs mentioned at the beginning.

Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said:

> An evil glance is one of the poisonous arrows of Shayṭān. How many of these glances become a cause of prolonged grief![2]

It is important to remember that looking at someone who is dressed decently and without any lustful intention is not ḥarām. However, looking lustfully is a sin and can lead to many harmful effects. Therefore, when we are in an environment where there are members of the opposite gender, we should be careful about our looks, avoid staring, and make sure that we are not looking at others lustfully.

2 *Wasā'il Ash-Shī'ah,* V. 20 P. 190

ACTIVITY 5.1B: THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Think... Think about what modesty means in Islam based on this lesson. At what level does the society we live in share this mentality on any level? What kind of issues do you think this can create for someone in middle school?

Pair... Compare and discuss your answers with a partner.

Share... Come up with a solution to one of the problems, using the āyah mentioned above as a guide. Questions to consider: What can we do to make it easier to follow the Islamic laws? How can we help each other stay on the right path?

Activity 5.1c: Partner/Group Skit Worksheet

You may use the space provided below to help brainstorm your skits. Remember to be respectful while presenting to classmates. Each group member must have a role to play.

SCENARIO 1: Your Non-Muslim friend approaches you asking about hijab in islam. Create a dialogue explaining its purpose and when/where it applies in your daily life.

Things to include in your dialogue:

- Whether ḥijāb is necessary for both men or women
- If so, how is the ḥijāb requirement similar and different for both?

SCENARIO 2: Your younger sibling approaches you asking about ḥijāb and why it's only for women. How do you respond? Create a dialogue you might have with your sibling to help clarify this misunderstanding.

Activity 5.1d: Review Questions

TRUE OR FALSE

1. _____ For girls who have become baligh, cousins are maḥram.

2. _____ Even if someone is maḥram to us, we must always try to dress decently in front of them.

3. _____ Ḥijāb is both a physical and spiritual barrier to shield us from worldly desires.

4. _____ Zīnah, or things that beautify you, are always permissible.

5. _____ Physical ḥijāb is only for women.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

6. Ḥijāb literally means
   - **a.** a head covering
   - **b.** a barrier
   - **c.** adornment

7. For a girl, ḥijāb is wājib in front of her
   - **a.** nephews
   - **b.** male cousins
   - **c.** paternal uncle
   - **d.** none of the above

8. Zīnah (adornment) is anything that
   - **a.** makes your appearance more modest
   - **b.** beautifies you
   - **c.** all of the above

9. The purpose of ḥijāb is to
   - **a.** protect society from corruption
   - **b.** protect individuals from misled desires
   - **c.** all of the above

10. If two people are maḥram to each other,
    - **a.** they do not need to observe ḥijāb
    - **b.** must still dress decently in each other's presence
    - **c.** they must observe full ḥijāb in front of each other
    - **d.** a & b

ḤADĪTH REVIEW

Explain what the ḥadīth mentioned above means and how it applies to our daily lives.

5.2 Rules of Food and Drink

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn the rules of eating and drinking in Islam
- Explore how animals are slaughtered humanely according to Islamic guidelines.
- Discover the Islamic etiquettes of eating.

Allah (swt) the All-Merciful has made the natural world, including animals, fruits, and vegetables, subservient to us in order to make our lives enjoyable and comfortable. One of the great blessings He has given us is the incredible variety of foods available to us. He has also set certain rules and laws when it comes to what we can consume, as He knows what is best for us. Not everything that exists in nature is meant to be consumed by human beings. A small portion of these things are harmful to us, spiritually or physically, so we must avoid them. In this lesson, we will learn the rules of what we are allowed to eat and drink and what we must avoid.

RULES OF FOOD AND DRINK

Foods that are permissible for us to eat are called **ḥalāl**. On the other hand, foods that are **ḥarām** are not permissible for us to eat and must be avoided. It is a sin to consume these foods.

MEAT

We are allowed to eat products from many different animals, as long as they are slaughtered in an Islamic manner. We will discuss the rules of Islamic slaughter later in this lesson.

Wild animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered are ḥalāl to eat if they are hunted and slaughtered properly (e.g. deer, gazelle and wild goat). One of the conditions is that when hunted the animal has the ability to flee. Therefore, wild baby deer (or similar baby animals) who are not developed enough to be able to run away when hunted are ḥarām to eat if they are killed through hunting. Their skin is also impermissible to use.

Domesticated land animals are permissible to eat if they are slaughtered in a prescribed way (e.g. cow, bull) even if they are young.

Animals whose blood does not gush out when slaughtered are ḥarām to eat. However, as with other animals like rabbits, their skin is ṭāhir if they are hunted or slaughtered in the right way.

ḤALĀL

Some animals whose meat is ḥalāl:

- Cow
- Goat
- Sheep
- Camel
- Chicken
- Emu
- Turkey
- Deer
- Gazelle
- Zebra

MAKRŪH

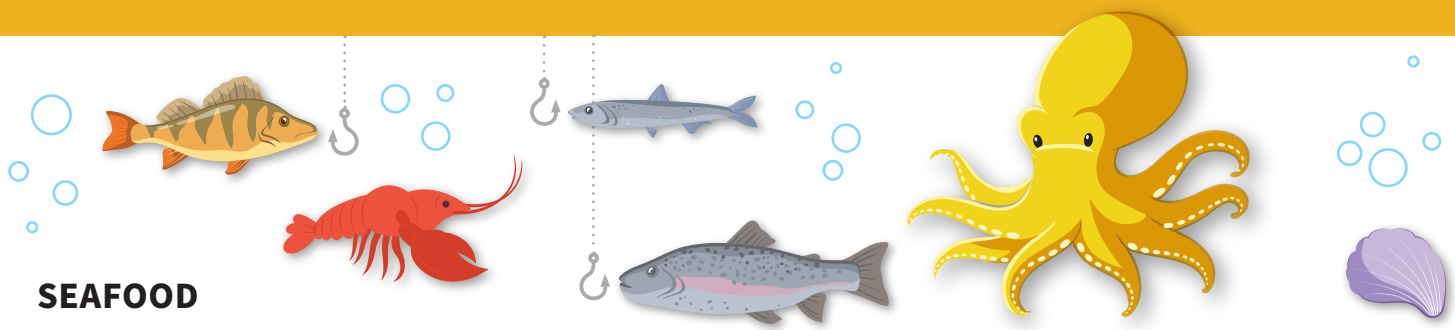
Land animals that are makrūh to eat:

- Horse
- Mule
- Donkey

ḤARĀM

Some animals whose meat is ḥarām:

- Pig
- Dog
- Cat
- Snakes
- Elephant
- Monkey
- Kangaroo
- Rabbit



SEAFOOD

It is important to know the rules regarding which seafood is and isn't ḥalāl for when we go fishing or buy fish from the grocery store.

> Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) has said:
> "Eat any fish that has scales, and do not eat those that do not have scales."[1]

There are two types of ḥalal seafood:

1. Any fish that have scales, and their eggs (often found in sushi). When in doubt whether a fish has scales, or when fish by-products are from fish that have scales, you have to investigate to make sure it is actually ḥalāl to eat.
2. Shrimp and prawn

The seafood must die after being caught, either in the net or after coming out of the water. Fish that die in the sea that weren't caught before dying are not permissible to eat.

The eggs of ḥalāl fish are ḥalāl to eat and the eggs of ḥarām fish are ḥarām to eat.

ḤARĀM

Some of the common ḥarām sea creatures include:

- Shark
- Crab
- Lobster
- Calamari / squid
- Octopus
- Swordfish
- Oyster
- Catfish
- Seawater eels
- Basa fish

Those marine animals are ḥarām to eat but are ṭāhir.

COMMON ḤALĀL & ḤARĀM SEAFOOD

(refer to this list):

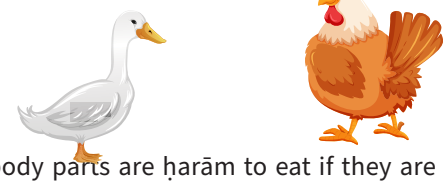
https://www.al-islam.org/fasting-and-ramadhan-sheikh-mansour-leghaei/common-ḥalāl-and-non-ḥalāl-sea-foods

BIRDS AND OTHER FLYING CREATURES

ḤALĀL

The following birds are ḥalāl to eat (This includes chickens and ducks.):

- Birds that flap their wings more than glide
- Birds that do not have talons



ḤARĀM

Baby wild birds are ḥarām to hunt. All their body parts are ḥarām to eat if they are hunted and killed, and these parts become najis.

The following birds are ḥarām to eat:

- Birds that glide more than they flap
- Birds that have talons

If such birds are hunted in the correct way their meat is not ḥalāl but their parts are ṭāhir.

1 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 6, P. 219

THINK ALOUD: Were you surprised by any of the categorizations above? Are there animals in the ḥalāl section that you have never eaten before?

EXTENSION: Choose one or two animals that are ḥarām to eat and research why they might be categorized as ḥarām. How do they live? What do they eat? Why might they be harmful for us to ingest?

CONDITIONS OF SLAUGHTER

The following conditions must be in place when slaughtering an animal:

- The slaughterer must be a Muslim (male or female).
- The knife used to slaughter the animal must be made of iron if available, according to certain marājiʿ.
- The throat, chest, and stomach of the animal must be facing the qiblah.
- The slaughterer must mention a remembrance containing the name of Allah, such as "Bismillāh" or "Allāhu Akbar," before slaughtering the animal. The person doing the slaughtering must mention the name of Allah themself.
- The four structures in the throat must be cut: the esophagus, the trachea, and the two major blood vessels. Therefore, the cut must be made under the "Adam's apple." The whole head should not be cut off completely until the animal is completely dead.
- After the animal is slaughtered, it should still have some motion (e.g., flap/blink). This helps the blood circulate out of the body.
- A normal amount of blood should come out of the animal's body after it is slaughtered.
  - ▷ In some countries, stunning the animals with an electric shock before slaughtering them is common. As long as the animal does not die due to this stunning, this is permissible. If the animal dies before being slaughtered due to this stunning, it is not permissible to eat.

RULES OF ISLAMIC SLAUGHTER

Islam has outlined specific rules for how an animal should be slaughtered in order for its meat to be ḥalāl. The method of ḥalāl slaughter is more merciful to the animal because it leads to a quicker and less painful death. It is also healthier because it allows more of the blood within the animal's body to come out when it is slaughtered, thereby reducing the amount of leftover blood, which is harmful to humans.

EATING OUT

At home, our parents usually cook, and they most likely are careful to buy ḥalāl meat from the butcher, so we do not usually have to worry about anything.

- However, when we are eating out, we must make sure the meat we are eating is ḥalāl.
- If the food we are eating does not contain obvious meat products, we can assume it is ḥalāl and do not need to investigate further.
- If what we are eating does contain obvious meat products, then we must reach reasonable certainty that the meat is ḥalāl. We may reach this reasonable certainty in one of the following ways:
  - ▷ The owner of the restaurant is a trustworthy Muslim who says the meat is ḥalāl
  - ▷ The shop has ḥalāl certification from a trustworthy Muslim organization

LIFE CONNECTION: EATING OUT
Choose your favorite ḥalāl restaurant and do a ḥalāl confirmation for them! Either identify the owner of the restaurant or find their ḥalāl certification.

NAJIS FOOD AND DRINK

In addition to the above rules, we must also remember that it is ḥarām to eat anything that has become najis. Sometimes, a type of food is ḥalāl to eat in itself, but becomes najis due to external reasons and therefore becomes impermissible to eat. Here are some situations where food may become najis:

Pig Products

Eating pork, ham, or other pig products is of course ḥarām. However, some places that sell ḥalāl food also sell pork products. Since pork is Najis, food cooked using the same pots, pans, or utensils as those used for pork or ham also becomes najis. If we are in doubt about whether there has been contact with pork or not, the rule is that we can assume that there has not been any contact. However, it may be better to take precaution and not buy from shops that also sell pig products.

Non-ḥalāl meat

If purchasing food from a restaurant that has both ḥalāl and non-ḥalāl meat, we must be careful regarding the ḥalāl food becoming najis. Meat that is not ḥalāl (from an animal which is not slaughtered Islamically) is najis (except seafood, which is ṭāhir even when it's not ḥalāl). So, if the ḥarām meat is prepared or cooked on the same surfaces that the ḥalāl meat is prepared, the food could become najis, making it ḥarām to eat. Again, if we are not sure if the food we are buying has become najis, we can still eat it, but it is always best to take precaution.

Disbelievers

Food becomes najis (Āyatullāh Sistani: according to iḥtiyāṭ wājib) if a kāfir (non-ahl al-kitāb kāfir) touches the food while their hand is wet, or if the food itself is a liquid or liquid-like and they make skin contact with it. If we are not sure whether the food has been touched by such a person with their bare hands, then we can assume it is pure and okay to eat.

Alcohol

As we know, beer and wine are ḥarām and also najis. If food comes into contact with beer or wine, then it becomes najis and impermissible to eat.

A common example of this is "beer batter," which is sometimes used to coat food like fish filets. Because this fish has come into contact with beer, it is not permissible to eat.

Another common issue is vanilla essence or extract or other substances that contain ethanol or ethyl alcohol.

- According to Āyatullāh Sistani, vanilla essence is not permissible to consume on its own because it has a high concentration of ethanol and is intoxicating. However, it is not najis. When a trace amount of vanilla extract (like a teaspoon) is added to a dish (like cake batter) the resulting food is still ḥalāl because the total quantity of ethanol in the food is less than 2% and it will virtually disappear.
- According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, ethanol is not najis unless one is certain that this type of alcohol was originally intoxicating and in liquid form. Since ethanol is a gas in its original form and is poisonous (not intoxicating) when it first takes a liquid form, it is not najis. Therefore, just like with Āyatullāh Sistani, vanilla essence is permissible to consume if added in a small amount into a larger dish.

RAPID REFLECTION: Are there any restaurants that you enjoy eating at which may be exposed to any of the najāsat (najis things) above?

THINK ALOUD: There are multiple portions in the section above that say it is better to take "precaution" when faced with the issue of our food being contaminated with najis items. What does this mean?

Activity 5.2a: Najāsat

Your new Muslim friend is concerned about the concept of najāsat in food. Explain in a simplistic way how najāsat is transferred and what to do if this occurs. Be prepared to share your answer with the class.

ETIQUETTES OF EATING AND DRINKING

The following are a list of some **mustaḥab** (recommended) and **makrūh** (disliked) actions when eating.

MUSTAḤAB

Mustaḥab / encouraged acts:

- Washing hands before eating
- Saying "Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm" before eating
- Saying "Alḥamdulillāh" after eating
- Eating slowly
- Eating with others, especially family members
- Cleaning between the teeth after eating
- Starting and ending the meal with some salt

MAKRŪH

Makrūh / discouraged acts:

- Eating raw or uncooked meat
- Overeating
- Leaning against something while eating
- Eating food while it is hot or blowing on food
- Putting bread under the plate
- Peeling fruit that is to be eaten with the peel
- Eating while walking
- Eating alone
- Eating in a separate place than subordinates

Activity 5.2b: Mustaḥab and Makrūh

In groups of three you will prepare a skit to share with the class. The teacher will assign each group two mustaḥab acts to portray and two makrūh acts to correct. Your skit should include the acts that you were assigned in a subtle way. As you are watching each other's skits, try to identify which mustaḥab and makrūh acts the group was assigned!

Activity 5.2c: Review Questions

1. I buy a new brand of ice cream from the cornershop. On my way home, I read the ingredients and realize that there is a very tiny amount of wine in the ice cream. What should I do?
   a. I can eat it because the amount of wine is very small
   b. I can eat it because the wine in it won't make me drunk
   c. It is najis and ḥarām to eat

2. I go to a shop that sells both ḥalāl and non-ḥalāl meat:
   a. I can eat the ḥalāl meat
   b. I cannot even eat the ḥalāl meat
   c. I can eat the ḥalāl meat as long as I'm sure it's ḥalāl and I haven't seen it come into contact with the non-ḥalāl meat

3. Any product made from pig:
   a. Is ḥarām but not najis
   b. Is not ḥarām or najis
   c. Is both ḥarām and najis

4. Which is true?
   a. All seafood is ḥalāl
   b. No seafood is ḥalāl
   c. Some seafood is ḥalāl

5. If I go to a shop where the owner/worker is a trustworthy Muslim who says the meat he sells is ḥalāl, then:
   a. I do not need to investigate any further, and I can buy from him
   b. I need to investigate further before I buy from him
   c. Neither of the above

6. **True or False:** A woman cannot slaughter an animal. _____

7. When slaughtering an animal their _____, _____, and _____must be facing the qiblah.

8. Why must the animal still have some motion after being slaughtered?

9. What are three different things the slaughterer can say right before slaughtering the animal?

BONUS ACTIVITY: Ḥalāl food is delicious food! Bring the recipe to your favorite meal (one you love to cook or love to eat or both) and share it with the class!

5.3 Music and Media

OBJECTIVES:

- Reflect on time as the greatest asset that Allah (swt) has given us in this world and the choices we can make to use this time to improve ourselves, reach perfection, and move closer to Him
- Explore music and songs, gaming, movies, and TV shows, as well as digital media as forms of entertainment that are often misused and can have many negative spiritual and physical effects
- Outline the features that can make music ḥarām and discuss how these guidelines can help us determine what is ḥalāl and ḥarām in terms of weddings as well as music and dance classes
- Discuss guidelines on what ḥarām elements to avoid in video games, TV shows, and digital media

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) said:
The feet of a servant of Allah (swt) will not move a step on the Resurrection Day until they are asked about four things: their life, how they spent it, their youth, and how they used it.[1]

In the past, we have talked about our purpose in life: *qurb ilāhi*, or closeness to Allah (swt). A major aspect of reaching this purpose is how we use our time. Time is the greatest asset that Allah (swt) has given us in this world in order to improve ourselves, reach perfection, and move closer to Him.

The Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) have taught us that our time should be split into three components. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) has said, "For a believer, there are three portions of time: a portion in which they converse with their Lord, a portion in which they seek their livelihood, and a portion dedicated to their ḥalāl pleasures that help them improve."[2]

REFLECTION ACTIVITY:
PART A: What does this ḥadīth tell us about how we should spend our time? Do you think you divide your time equally among these three things?
PART B: Why does the Imām (ʿa) mention pleasure or entertainment as one of the portions of time? Is this something necessary? What are some examples of ḥalāl entertainment or pleasure?

ENTERTAINMENT: RULES AND GUIDELINES

As we can see from the above ḥadīth, entertainment is an important part of life. We all need some time to rest and recuperate so that we can continue engaging in other important activities, such as worship and earning a livelihood. Many types of entertainment are permissible in Islam. Activities such as playing sports, being in nature, socializing with family and friends, and travelling are all permissible in and of themselves.

However, there are some forms of entertainment about which we need to be extra careful. This is because, in today's world, these forms of entertainment are being misused and can have many negative spiritual and physical effects on us. These include: music and songs, gaming, movies, and TV shows, as well as digital media use. In this lesson, we will look at some of the guidelines and rules that Islam sets for us in this regard. These rules are in place to protect us from the many possible harmful effects of these types of entertainment.

1 *Ghurar Al-Akhbār*, Ḥadīth #923
2 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ḥadīth #378

MUSIC, SONGS, AND DANCING

There are a lot of questions surrounding music, and which forms of music are permissible and ḥarām. Listening to ḥarām music is a definite sin in Islam. Perhaps some of the wisdom behind Allah's ruling on this issue can be due to the several bad effects music has on the person who listens to it. Ultimately, we must remember that Allah's rulings are made to ensure that we live our lives in a way that we are able to reach our true potential, and He seeks to free us through teaching us what is good for us! Later in this lesson, we will look at the rules we can apply to determine which music is ḥarām. For now, we will briefly look at some of the reasons *why* music is ḥarām in Islam.

SOME REASONS WHY MUSIC CAN BE ḤARĀM

1. Ḥarām songs and singing can cause inappropriate desires to enter a person's heart, and this can lead to other sins. Both the singer and the one who listens attentively to it become negligent towards Allah (swt) and are more inclined toward immoral deeds.
2. Music can distract us from the reality of our lives. This deadens the heart, making it difficult for us to pay attention in our prayers and enjoy the spirituality of supplications.
3. Ḥarām music almost always comes along with promoting a ḥarām lifestyle.

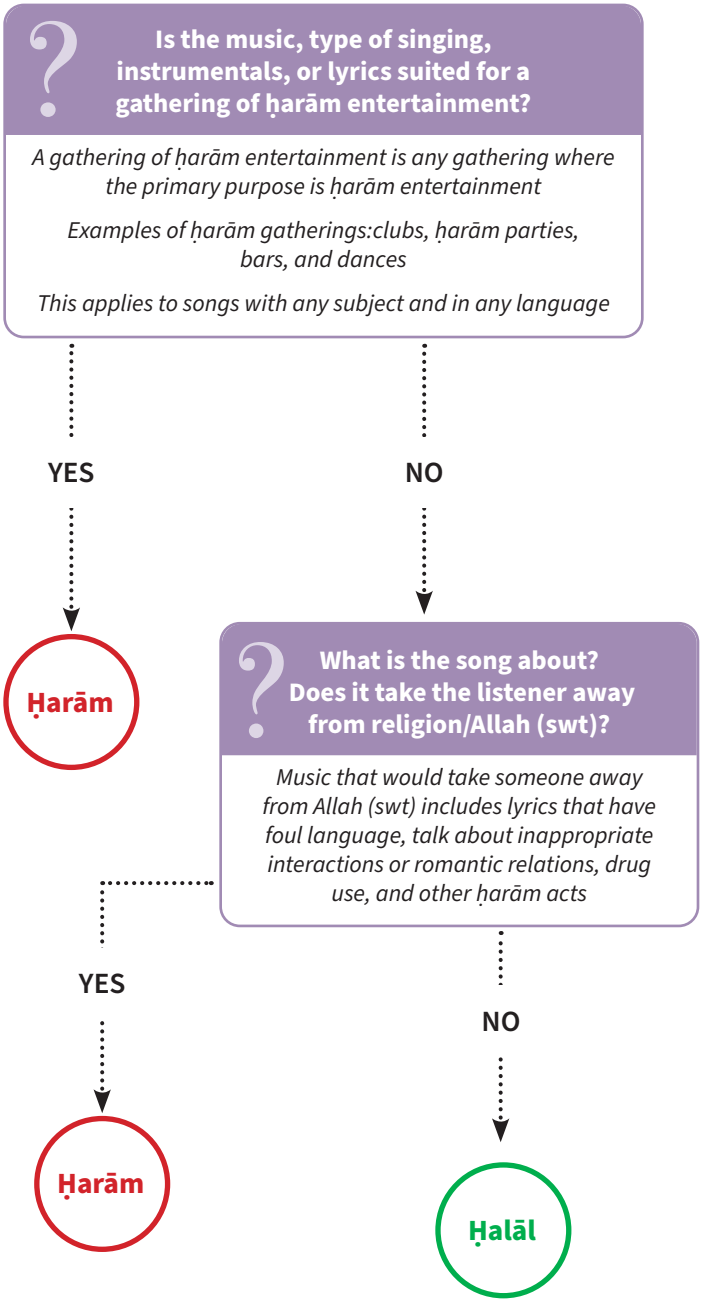
THINK ALOUD: Do we know why the Fajr ṣalāh is two rakʿahs and not three or four?

Although we have listed some reasons for why music can be ḥarām, we will never know the *complete* wisdom behind most of Allah's rulings. However, we still have to follow the rulings, since we know that Allah (swt) is the All-Knowledgeable, All-Powerful, All-Loving, and All-Wise, and therefore, His rulings are in our best interest. For example, we do not know why Fajr is two rakʿahs instead of three or four. If, one day, we wanted to pray three rakʿahs because we have the energy to, this would invalidate our prayer. In the same way, we cannot use the excuse that we think that ḥarām music does not affect us. We know that Allah (swt) has made these rulings for a reason.

Sometimes, rulings are black and white; for example, Fajr is two rakʿahs, eating pork is ḥarām, etc. For other rulings, however, Islam gives boundaries, but the application of these rulings is our responsibility.

WHAT MAKES MUSIC AND SONGS ḤARĀM?

The following guidelines can be followed in order to determine if a song is ḥarām:


Is the music, type of singing, instrumentals, or lyrics suited for a gathering of ḥarām entertainment?
A gathering of ḥarām entertainment is any gathering where the primary purpose is ḥarām entertainment
Examples of ḥarām gatherings:clubs, ḥarām parties, bars, and dances
This applies to songs with any subject and in any language
YES
NO
Ḥarām
What is the song about? Does it take the listener away from religion/Allah (swt)?
Music that would take someone away from Allah (swt) includes lyrics that have foul language, talk about inappropriate interactions or romantic relations, drug use, and other ḥarām acts
YES
NO
Ḥarām
Ḥalāl

Activity 5.3a: What differentiates ḥarām music from ḥalāl music?

Complete the compare and contrast Venn diagram below with the distinct features of ḥarām music and then provide the features, by contrast, that would make some music ḥalāl. Are there any overlaps in their features?

WHAT IF I CAN'T TELL IF A SONG IS ḤARĀM?

We are responsible for learning all of the rulings concerning ḥalāl and ḥarām music, as well as any rulings that apply to our lives. This is wājib upon us. If we do our responsibility of finding out the rulings, but we *honestly* cannot tell whether it is ḥarām or ḥalāl still, then we can listen to it.

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq has said, "A house in which there is ghinā (ḥarām singing) is not safe from calamity; supplications in that house are not answered; and no angels enter such a house."[3]

Imām al-Hādī (ʿa) has also said, "If a person listens to someone, he is worshipping him. If that person speaks for Allah, then the person is worshipping Allah, but if that person speaks for Shayṭān, then that person is worshipping Shayṭān."

GATHERINGS WITH MUSIC

Listening to ḥarām music during any gathering is ḥarām. This prohibition applies to weddings as well. If we are at a wedding and ḥarām music starts playing, we should enjoin good by advising the host to change the music, if possible. If that is not possible, we should leave the gathering.

What about places where music is playing in the background, like at the mall? If you are not *actively listening* to a song, then you have not committed a sin.

DANCING

Dancing is generally discouraged in Islam, and most forms of it (such as the type of dancing that takes place in ḥarām gatherings of entertainment) are prohibited. Also, if it occurs in a mixed gathering of males and females then it is definitely forbidden.

MUSIC AND DANCE CLASSES AT SCHOOL

It is part of the curriculum at some schools to learn music and dancing. It is important to remember the following points in this regard:

- If the musical instrument is one that is not primarily used for sinful gatherings, then learning this instrument is permissible
- If the type of singing is one that is not primarily for sinful gatherings, then it is permissible to take part in this class
- However, if the type of music or the singing is one that is primarily or usually used in sinful gatherings, then it is not permissible to take part in this class
- It is generally not permissible to take part in dance classes

THINK, PAIR, SHARE:

Think... What are some polite ways that you could remove yourself from situations where you may be actively exposed to ḥarām music?

Pair... Come up with three scenarios where you may be placed in the difficult position of having to leave a place with ḥarām music. Then, practice extricating yourself from those scenarios with a partner.

Share! Be ready to share with the class!

3 *Daʿāim Al-Islam*, V.2, P. 28

VIDEO GAMES

Video games are a common form of entertainment. Playing video games in and of itself is permissible and can be a good way of bonding with friends, improving hand-eye coordination, and engaging in ḥalāl entertainment.

As with all things, though, it needs to be done in moderation. Playing video games excessively can have harmful effects on our life. Firstly, it can cause us to neglect our important duties in relation to our families, studies, and religion. The hours spent playing video games may mean we are not helping our parents with chores, doing our homework or assignments, or offering our ṣalāh on time. This is the first sign that we should cut back on the time we spend playing video games.

Video games can have severe impacts on our health. With the new advancements of technology people are spending more and more time in front of screens. Whether it is our smartphones, tvs, playstations or other gaming devices the effect on our mental and physical health is the same. Quickly, we don't realize how much time we are actually sitting in front of the screen which leaves us disconnected with nature. The impact on our physical health is now beginning to show itself. As many children and adults are leaving sports and physical activity and replacing it with gaming and screen time, the effects according to The National Library of Medicine are detrimental. A 2010 study showed a significant correlation between gaming and depression, anxiety, sleep issues, as well as physical illness.[4]

Just like any screen time, consistent gaming can lead to a wide range of mental, physical and spiritual defects. It is best to be able to control the amount of time you spend gaming, and if you cannot control it, it is best to stay away from it as it has the potential to cause many issues within our lives.

Gaming can also become an addiction. There are some signs that a person may be addicted to gaming, such as:

- Losing control over gaming
- Feeling guilty about gaming, but still engaging in gaming for extended periods
- Prioritizing gaming to the extent that it takes precedence over other interest and activities
- Continuing to game despite its negative effects on their studies, family relationships, or social life

If a person feels they may be suffering from addiction to gaming, they should seek help from their parents or other trusted support people. It is also important to remember the following points regarding gaming:

- Games that include inappropriate or arousing visual scenes are not permissible to play. If playing a game leads to indecent thoughts, then playing this game is not permissible, even if the scenes are animated.
- Games that revolve around ḥarām themes, such as excessive violence, drug use, and inappropriate relations are not allowed.
- Many games contain ḥarām music. Listening to this music is not permissible.
- Gaming typically comes along with a social component, where groups of gamers will play together. It is extremely important to remember that many times we do not know the person who is on the other end of the game. We need to keep ourselves and our families safe. If we do know the others that we are playing with, we need to be cautious of using harmful or aggressive language, bullying, and staying away from other harmful effects of gaming with a social media component. We should not follow high profile gamers on social media as they often have inappropriate themes and language.

4 Zamani, E., Chashmi, M., & Hedayati, N. (2009). *Effect of addiction to computer games on physical and mental health of female and male students of Guidance School in city of Isfahan*. Addiction & health. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3905489/

Activity 5.3b: Video Game Features

There are many video games that are considered ḥalāl to play. What features would you look for when searching for a ḥalāl video game to play? Make a checklist below of those beneficial features. What features would you consider red flags to avoid? Make a second checklist for features to exclude from your search.

FEATURES TO AVOID	FEATURES TO LOOK FOR

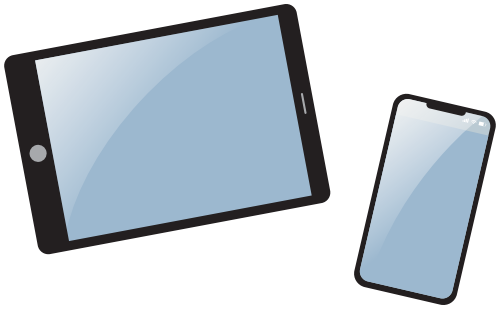
MOVIES AND TV SHOWS

Movies and TV shows are another common form of entertainment in today's society. Some shows and movies are beneficial, while others may have negative effects on our spirituality and psychology. When watching TV or movies, we need to remember the following:

- The content should not include inappropriate scenes, such as people in a state of undress, wearing revealing clothing, or committing indecent acts. We should remember that ḥijāb and Islamic modest conduct are Islamic duties, and include guarding our gaze. Guarding our gaze includes not watching inappropriate scenes or scenes that lead to inappropriate thoughts.
- The content should not revolve around inappropriate themes, such as inappropriate relationships, drug use, or other negative behaviors. Some shows do not necessarily have explicit content, but the plot and theme centers around inappropriate relationships or other inappropriate behaviors. Watching these shows is not allowed.

It is also important to exercise moderation when it comes to watching movies and shows. "Binging" on a show for hours is not healthy or beneficial and may lead to negative effects in our lives.

QUICK WRITE: All of the media listed in this lesson (music, video games, television, and digital media) are associated with addiction. Take a few minutes to answer the following question: What harms do addictions cause in our lives and what are some ways that we can protect ourselves from developing unhealthy and addictive media habits?



DIGITAL MEDIA (SMALL-SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT)

Smartphones and devices have become a major part of life. We can use them for many beneficial things, such as listening to words of inspiration from scholars of the religion, keeping in touch with family and friends, and obtaining information about the world around us. However, smartphones also pose dangers to our health. Excessive use of devices can lead to many psychological and spiritual problems, including reduced attention spans, impaired ability to concentrate, procrastination, and social withdrawal. As with other things, we need to be moderate in our use of devices. The following tips may help us reduce the amount of time spent on devices:

- Set a "device-free" time-period for a couple of hours each day. During this time, do not use devices at all.
- Adjust app preferences constantly triggered by notifications.
- Reduce the number of applications on devices. Keep only the necessary and very beneficial ones.
- When at home, use computers and other large-screen devices that are less private to allow for adult supervision

In addition to exercising moderation, we also need to remember the following:

- As discussed above, watching inappropriate scenes is ḥarām and has many negative effects on our spirituality. Just because someone forwards a clip, or an advertisement appears on our video feed, we do not need to watch it. We should be very selective about what we open or watch.
- We should not engage in inappropriate communication with anyone, and we should be very careful in communicating with members of the opposite gender. Just like it is not permissible to be in a private room with someone from the opposite gender when there is a chance of ḥarām occurring at the moment or in the future, it is also impermissible to be in a private chat. We have discussed this in further detail in the lessons on ḥijāb.

Activity 5.3c: Review Questions

DISCUSSION: Sumayya's friend Anilah is listening to music on her phone and Sumayya overhears swear words and bad lyrics. She knows that Anilah is a good person and just needs a reminder of ḥalāl and ḥarām. What are some of the things we learned in this lesson that she should use to advise Anilah?

1. Music is ḥarām if it:
   - **a.** Is usually played in gatherings of sin
   - **b.** Makes a person want to dance
   - **c.** All music is ḥarām

2. A "love song" is:
   - **a.** Counted as a "vain" song and is ḥarām
   - **b.** Okay to listen to if the music is not ḥarām
   - **c.** Okay to listen to if a man is singing it

3. Selling or distributing ḥarām music or songs:
   - **a.** Is okay
   - **b.** Is ḥarām
   - **c.** Is makrūh

HISTORY & ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER 1

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)

1.1 Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) Early Life

1.2 The Prophet's (ṣ) Messengership Begins

1.1 Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) Early Life

OBJECTIVES:

- Compare and contrast the narrations about the first revelation
- Recognize the true sentiment the Prophet (ṣ) held regarding the first revelation
- Identify the purposes of enjoining good and forbidding evil
- Outline specific strategies for enjoining good and forbidding evil

AN OVERVIEW OF PROPHET MUḤAMMAD (Ṣ)

Name	Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdullah
Kunyah	Abūl Qāsim, others
Title	Khātam An-Nabiyīn, Al-Muṣṭafā
Parents	Haḍrat ʿAbdullah bin ʿAbd Al-Muṭṭalib and Haḍrat Āminah bint Wahab
Date of Birth	177th Rabīʿ Al-Awwal 53 BH, 570 CE, 0 Ām ul-Fīl
Birthplace	Mecca
Date of Wafāt	28th Ṣafar, 11 AH
Place of Wafāt	Madīnah Al-Munawwarah
Lifespan	63 Years
Location of Shrine	Masjid An-Nabawi

TIMELINE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (Ṣ)

53 BH
570 AD

Birth of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh

We learned in previous years that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) was sent to Mecca, where life was rooted in cultural practices and most people were illiterate and many were polytheists.

The Prophet's (ṣ) mission began at a time when people were uncivilized and extremely resistant to any form of change. They would go to the extent of trying to kill anyone who proposed change.

Prior to the biʿthat (delegation of Prophethood), the Messenger of Allah (ṣ) used to frequently escape city life and spend time alone in the cave of Ḥirāʾ, located north of Makkah. There, he would worship Allah (swt) and ponder about His creation. Day by day, his humility and submission to Allah (swt) increased. On one such day when he was in the cave, something very different happened! It was the 27th of Rajab, coinciding with the day of Nawrūz, when the Prophet (ṣ) was 40 years old.

TRADITIONS REGARDING THE FIRST REVELATION

By checking narrations against the principles of Islam and logical reasoning it becomes clear that some narrations are inauthentic. If people take problematic traditions to be authentic, it can affect their entire perspective of an important aspect of Islam. For example, some Muslims interpret the event of Ghadīr Khumm (which we will talk about in subsequent lessons) differently from Shīʿahs, and their entire belief system is then different.

Let's look at an example from the Prophet's (ṣ) life.

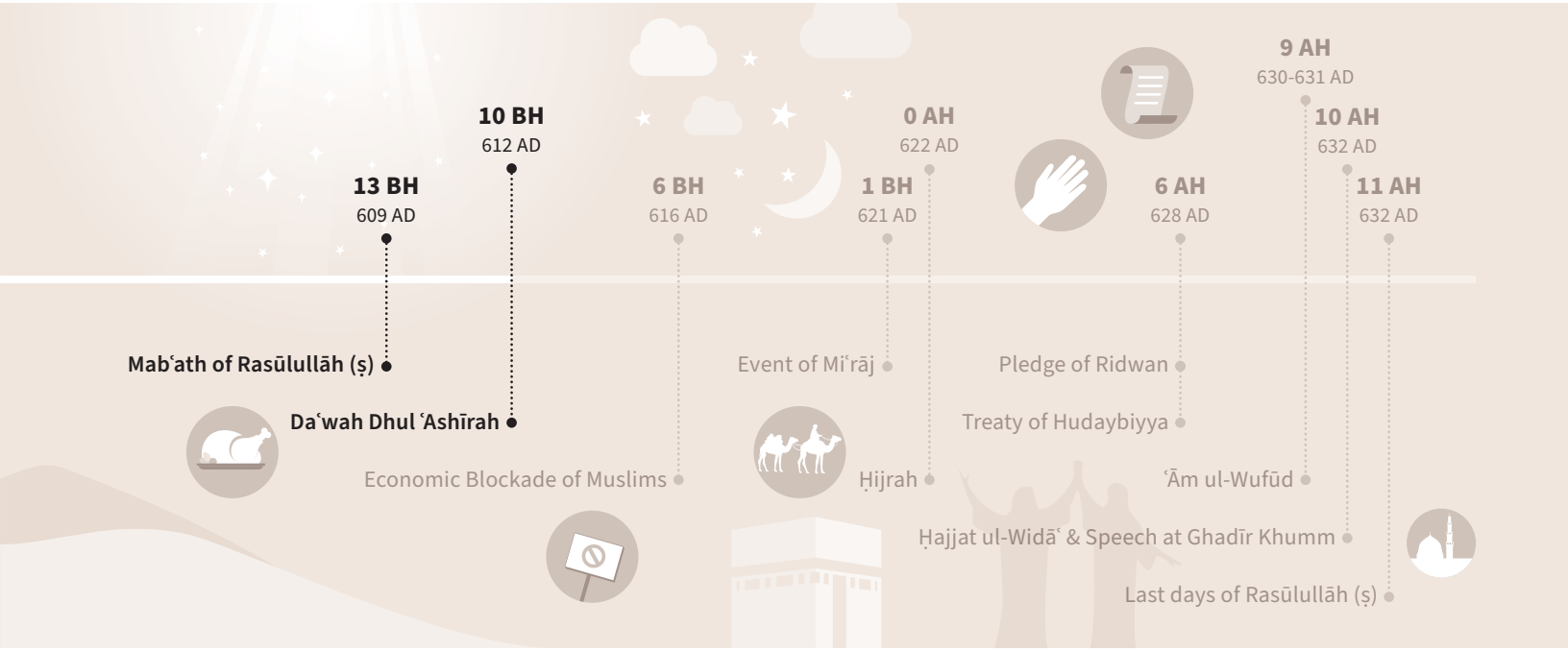
Some Muslims believe that when the Prophet (ṣ) received the first verse of Sūrah Al-ʿAlaq from Jabrāʾīl, he became very frightened. The Prophet (ṣ) doubted what he saw and rushed home and narrated the story to his wife Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa). He told her that he doubted what he saw in the cave. She asked the Prophet (ṣ) whether he was seeing an angel or devil to which he said that he was unsure.

These narrations imply that the Prophet (ṣ) was:

- Unable to distinguish angels from devils and needed someone else to guide him
- Not aware of his purpose in life (due to the surprised reaction to Jabrāʾīl's message)

THINK ALOUD: What are the problems with assuming that the Prophet did not understand what was happening to him?

Many of our scholars use the argument that if the Prophet (ṣ) was so unsure about the incident, how could he ever be sure that any verses of the Qur'ān that were revealed to him are from Allah (swt)? If we assume that he did not understand what was occurring, this can also be an argument against other verses in the Qur'ān and revelations that the Prophet (ṣ) received.



In contrast to the traditions mentioned above, let us look at a tradition from Imām Al-Hādī (ʿa) about the incident:

"…When Muḥammad (ṣ) reached the age of forty, Allah looked at his heart and found it the brightest and the softest heart. Thus, He ordered the gates of Heaven to be opened for him. Then Allah sent the angels down to him. Muḥammad saw them. Muḥammad looked at Jabrāʾīl who was within an aura of brightness around him. Jabrāʾīl came to him and shook his hand and said to him,

"Recite!" He said, "What should I recite?" The angel said:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Read in the Name of your Lord who created…[1]

Muḥammad (ṣ) was overjoyed and excited. He came down from the mountain wondering if the pagans of Quraysh would deny his revelation. Thus, Allah (swt) willed to empower his Messenger with more certainty and hence he did not pass by any vegetation or rock but they greeted him as the 'Messenger of Allah'..."[2]

This second tradition doesn't have the objections presented regarding the first tradition. Here we can see that the Prophet (ṣ) always chose the right actions and morals in what he did. We always need a role model and a leader who has the highest of spiritual qualifications so that they can guide and lead us to becoming as close as we can to Allah (swt), and to help us practice all of the teachings of Islam. The Prophet (ṣ) always acted in a perfect manner, which demonstrated his pureness and elevated status in the eyes of Allah (swt).

With the onset of the revelation, the Prophet (ṣ) started an all-out struggle to invite people towards the truth. This relentless struggle of his continued through the most difficult of conditions: from threats and numerous wars to political pressure and economic sanctions. Nothing could diminish his resolve or frighten him. In a backward and hopeless society where racism, violence and superstitions were prevalent he planted the seeds of his *ummah*.

On the one hand he trained people one-by-one, passing on to them the pure teachings of Islam that he embodied. On the other hand he recognized the reality of how Islam needed a political order in order to attain its goals. Forming a government, forming an army, sending letters to other governments - all these are indicative of his astute statesmanship. His ten years of ruling from Medina are forever recorded in history as a shining example of Islamic government. When he passed away, 23 blessed years after the first revelation, he left behind a community at the peak of power and dignity. This same system and community, within a short span of time, became the most powerful force in the world.

1 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-ʿAlaq, 96:1

2 *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V.18, Ḥadīth #205

ENJOINING GOOD AND FORBIDDING EVIL

The Prophet (ṣ) not only taught many morals and values but he also encouraged people to put them into practice. The Prophet (ṣ) has said:

> "He who sees wrong being done should redress the situation with his own hand, and if he cannot do so then with his tongue, and if he cannot do so then with his heart (disapproving the act) - and that is the weakest level of faith."[3]

THINK ALOUD: What does this ḥadith mean? What are some ways we put this ḥadīth into practice?

Enjoining good means that we should encourage and urge others to do good deeds. The spirit behind this obligation also means we should create a social environment where people are encouraged to adhere to the laws of Islam and do good deeds. Forbidding evil means that we should discourage and prohibit others from doing evil deeds. The spirit behind this obligation includes creating a social environment where people are discouraged from transgressing against the laws of Islam or dong evil deeds.

Enjoining good and forbidding evil are collective obligations (wājib kifā'ī). This means that the obligation stands until someone meets it, then it no longer applies to anyone.

Here are some strategies of putting these responsibilities into practice:

- **Speak kindly to people:** This will encourage them towards doing good. For example, yelling at someone to offer their prayers is obviously not encouraging and if anything, will cause them to dislike praying.
- **Educate:** If someone is listening to ḥarām music, it may be effective to remind them that the music is ḥarām. But for someone whose beliefs aren't very strong, it might be better to take a different approach. For example, you could describe how our ears are Allah's trust given to us, and one day we will have to return our trusts. We will be asked how we treated them. Another approach would be to kindle the love of Allah (swt) in the heart of that person by reminding them of how blessed we are, and how we should show our thanks to Allah (swt) by using His blessings in the way He wants us to.
- **A limit to kindness:** If you have explained numerous times to a person the reasons why something is wrong but they insist on their evil action or keep encouraging you to do that evil action, then frowning at them or even avoiding them (at least temporarily) may be the only option left in order to protect yourself and others in the community. For example, if the host or speaker on a show constantly makes statements or jokes about skin color despite their teachers and community members reminding them this is incorrect, we can avoid them to protect ourselves and show dislike for them to others.

The Prophet (ṣ) served as an example in many ways for us. By implementing the verses of the Qur'ān and authentic narrations from his life, we can follow his example.

There are many ways we can emulate the sunnah (ways and traditions) of the Prophet (ṣ) and his family. One of the wājib responsibilities we have, when we are certain it will be effective, is to recommend doing good for others and forbidding evil. When we actively act in this way, we can change how people around us behave.

3 *Scale of Wisdom,* Ḥadīth #4210

Activity 1.1a: Deciphering the Themes in a Ḥadīth

Sections of two ḥadīth from different sources are quoted below. Compare and contrast these ḥadīth based on the following questions.

1. Then when he completed 40 years of age, Allah (swt) the Exalted and Glorious looked at his heart. He found it to be the best of hearts, the greatest, most submissive, and most humble. Therefore He ordered that the doors of the heavens to open and the angels to descend while Muḥammad looked at this. And He ordered that His mercy descend from the bottom of His ʿarsh (throne) down to the head of Muḥammad. And he looked at Jibrāʾīl - the trustworthy spirit, encompassed in light, the most beautiful of all the angels - to descend upon him, grab his upper arm and shake it saying, *"O Muḥammad! Read!"*. He [Muḥammad] replied *"And what should I read?"* Jibrāʾīl said, *"O Muḥammad! Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging mass. Read, and your Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."*[4]

2. The Angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him salvation) replied, "I do not know how to read." The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him salvation) added, "The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read and I replied, 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I replied, 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?' Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said, *'Read in the name of your Lord, who has created (all that exists), created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous.'"*[5] [4] Then Allah's Messenger (may God bless him and grant him salvation) returned with the Inspiration and with his heart beating severely. Then he went to Khadija bint Khuwaylid and said, "Cover me! Cover me!" They covered him till his fear was over and after that he told her everything that had happened and said, "I fear that something may happen to me."[6]

4 The special day of biʿthat is described by Imām Ḥasan Al-ʿAskarī (a) in the first hadith.

5 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-ʿAlaq, 96:1-3

6 *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*

1. Why would it be important in the context of the first revelation that Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) did not know how to read? Would that impact how he felt?

2. How does each ḥadīth depict what the Prophet (ṣ) felt when Angel Jibrāʾīl narrated the verses of the Qurʾān to him?

3. Try to guess the source of each ḥadith and if it seems to be the true sentiment that you learned about in the lesson.

Discuss & Write

Before Islām, Arabian society worshipped idols and had many violent and ignorant beliefs. For the first three to six years after the mabʿath (receiving the message), Allah (swt) did not ask the Prophet (ṣ) to spread his message far and wide. What were some of the benefits of limiting the message in those first years?

Activity 1.1b

Talha, a classmate who knows some of the fiqh rulings about how to treat others, has a tendency to say derogatory statements, especially towards classmates who have darker skin tones. You try and remind him that this is racist, but he says that he's not racist because he's friend with Ali Muhammad, a black Muslim in your class.

Brainstorm some ways in which you might try to remind him of good and help him stay away from ḥarām prejudice. Remember, we all have a tendency to soak in some kinds of prejudice from the society around us, and how we act and speak is very important, especially when it comes to anti-black sentiment in the Muslim community.

1.2 The Prophet's (ṣ) Messengership Begins

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the public sentiment surrounding the first revelation and invitation to Islam
- Identify the position Bilāl ibn Rabāh held in early Islamic society and what we can learn from his life
- Analyze how the Prophet (ṣ) countered discrimination in early Muslim society
- Explain some ways to address cultural prejudice within our own communities

GENERAL INVITATION TO ISLAM AND THE FIRST MUSLIMS

Three years after receiving the first revelation, the Prophet (ṣ) began inviting the general public to accept Islam. In those first three years, the Prophet (ṣ) began by inviting his family and a select few companions to Islam. After this core had formed, he then publicly preached the message of "There is no god but Allah" and "Muḥammad is His messenger". He educated people about the hereafter and Allah's (swt) system of reward and punishment.

Many people found his words very attractive because they conformed to reason and logic. At the same time, there were others who reacted negatively towards the message of Islam and began to oppose it very publicly.

THINK ALOUD: Who were the people that were most vocal in their opposition to Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)? Why was this demographic the most opposed to the message of Islam?

Many people in positions of power reacted angrily towards the Prophet (ṣ) because they realised his teachings threatened their status and interests. They called him a magician who wished to create discord and disunity amongst them. They even urged their children to throw stones and rubbish at him as he walked in their alleys.

With a lot of forbearance, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) continued his message together with a few companions who had secretly accepted Islam before this general invitation. These included Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ, Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī, Salmān Al-Fārsi, Miqdād, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir.

The Quraysh leadership, headed by Abū Sufyān, could no longer tolerate the Prophet's (ṣ) message and decided to kill him and subject his companions to extreme torture with the hope of forcing them to surrender.

BILĀL IBN RABĀḤ

Bilāl was one of the first converts to Islam. He was from Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, as it was known then, and the slave of Umayyah bin Khalaf in Mecca. In Mecca, Bilāl's hatred of the corruption that he saw during this time of Jāhiliyah (ignorance) grew in intensity. He wanted to find a solution for it, and he heard about Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) from people.

One night, he decided to sneak away to meet Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) to hear verses of the Qurʾān. When Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) told Bilāl about the message of Islam and recited verses of Qurʾān to him, Bilāl started to weep in happiness and accepted Islam, as his heart was searching for this tranquility. Bilāl was an example for us that Islam is a religion for everyone, and if we struggle to find the Truth, Allah (swt) will help us on our path to Him.

When Umayyah found out that Bilāl was now a Muslim, he said, "I will punish Bilāl in such a way that no one will dare become a Muslim ever again." Umayyah and other men tied Bilāl's hands and feet and put a large rock on his chest, so that his back was pressed against the burning sand. Bilāl continued to call out "Aḥad" (One God), which only attracted more people to Islam when they saw his resilience.

Each day, Bilāl's body became weaker, as these enemies of Islam dragged him across burning sand, but Bilāl did not stop calling out the name of Allah (swt). When the Prophet (ṣ) heard about this barbarism towards Bilāl, he approached Umayyah to buy Bilāl and set him free. Umayyah agreed because he realized that because Bilāl would not renounce his faith, and that the torture only made the polytheists look weaker. Bilāl demonstrated what true īmān is and how, when we are strong in our beliefs and practice, the people around us will see the Truth.

THINK ALOUD: How can we implement some of the traits Bilāl showed throughout his torture in our own lives?

As the situation in Mecca became worse, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) began preparations for the Ḥijrah—the migration — to Medina, where people were waiting to welcome him. Bilāl was amongst those who had to leave Medina before the Prophet (ṣ), and even this small separation was difficult for him. Every day, he would sit on the road that leads to Mecca and wait for the Prophet's (ṣ) arrival. This is an example for us of how to love the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), especially the Imām (ʿaj) of our time.

POSITION IN MEDINA

When Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) came to Medina, he started a masjid and created a pact of brotherhood between some of the believers from Mecca and Medina so that they would be responsible for one another.

People needed to know when it was time to pray, and so Allah revealed the ādhān — the call to prayer — to Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) told Imām Ali (ʿa) to teach this to Bilāl, which demonstrates his status. Bilāl was chosen for his sincerity in his faith, even though there were many others that had a better voice and better Arabic pronunciation. Bilāl was also appointed as the first treasurer of Islam because of his trustworthiness and faith. He distributed khums, zakāh, and all other types of wealth in a fair manner.

This verse was revealed about the status of Bilāl and the rejection of the ideas of jāhiliyyah that determined the status of people based on class and race:

> "O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-aware."[1]

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Az-Zumar, 39:45

After Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) passed away, Bilāl was still a sincere follower of the Ahl al-Bayt. He took an oath not to recite the adhān for anyone, because he knew that the rightful successor of the Prophet (ṣ) was Imām Ali (ʿa), and he did not want to legitimize the rule of any other khalīfah by reciting adhān in the mosque under their control. Over time, the rulers realized that this was a threat to their legitimacy and they exiled — forced him to leave — to Syria.

Bilāl is now buried in Damascus, away from the Prophet (ṣ). According to some historical sources, he was exiled for refusing to give allegiance to the khalīfah.

Bilāl was a companion who had true maʿrifah (awareness) of the status and ḥaqq (rights) of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), and he put this maʿrifah into action through his refusal to legitimize anyone else's rule by reciting the call to prayer for them. Bilāl chose a life of hardship, being exiled and turned away from a home he had for many years, which shows us how determined he was to act on the knowledge he did possess. We can learn from this courageous companion of Rasūlullah (ṣ), and we hope to be in his ranks on the Day of Judgement.

Such was the faith of the close companions of the Prophet (ṣ).

THINK ALOUD: What steps can we take to become as strong in faith as the close companions and Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa)? Are we following their example and always looking for ways to improve ourselves?

THE PROPHET (Ṣ) DID NOT TOLERATE DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

One of the main parts of the Prophet's (ṣ) message was that everyone, whether male or female, black or white, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab, were only judged by their piety in the eyes of Allah (swt).[2] Muslims were asked to sit and dine together with the poor, accept their proposals of marriage to their daughters, and even to share positions of leadership with them.

These messages were not taken very well by that community because it meant that they would have to change their old habits and attitudes at the onset of accepting Islam. The oppressed loved these teachings but the oppressors detested them.

THINK ALOUD: How would these teachings put the oppressors in jeopardy of losing their power?

Once, a rich person dressed in clean and elegant clothes arrived in the presence of the Prophet (ṣ) and sat down before him. A short while later, a poor person wearing old and tattered clothes arrived, saluted the assembly, and sat down upon finding a vacant place.

2 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-Ḥujurāt, 49:13

The Prophet (ṣ) had taught them that all Muslims were brothers and in an assembly one should sit wherever one finds a place, regardless of any status. Now, it so happened that this poor man was seated next to a very rich man. The rich man tried to collect the edges of his dress around himself, so that the poor man didn't touch them.

Having observed this, the Prophet (ṣ) remarked to the rich man: "Did you fear that the poor person next to you might make your clothes dirty?"

"No," replied the rich person.

"Then why did you behave so?" asked the Prophet (ṣ).

"I admit that was the most undesirable thing to do. It was an error and I confess my guilt. I have a companion that makes good deeds appear evil to me and vice-versa. O Prophet of Allah! As a punishment for this reprehensible act of mine, I give half of my wealth to the poor man."

Turning to the poor man, the Prophet (ṣ) inquired, "Do you accept the off er?"

"No, O Prophet of Allah," said the poor man.

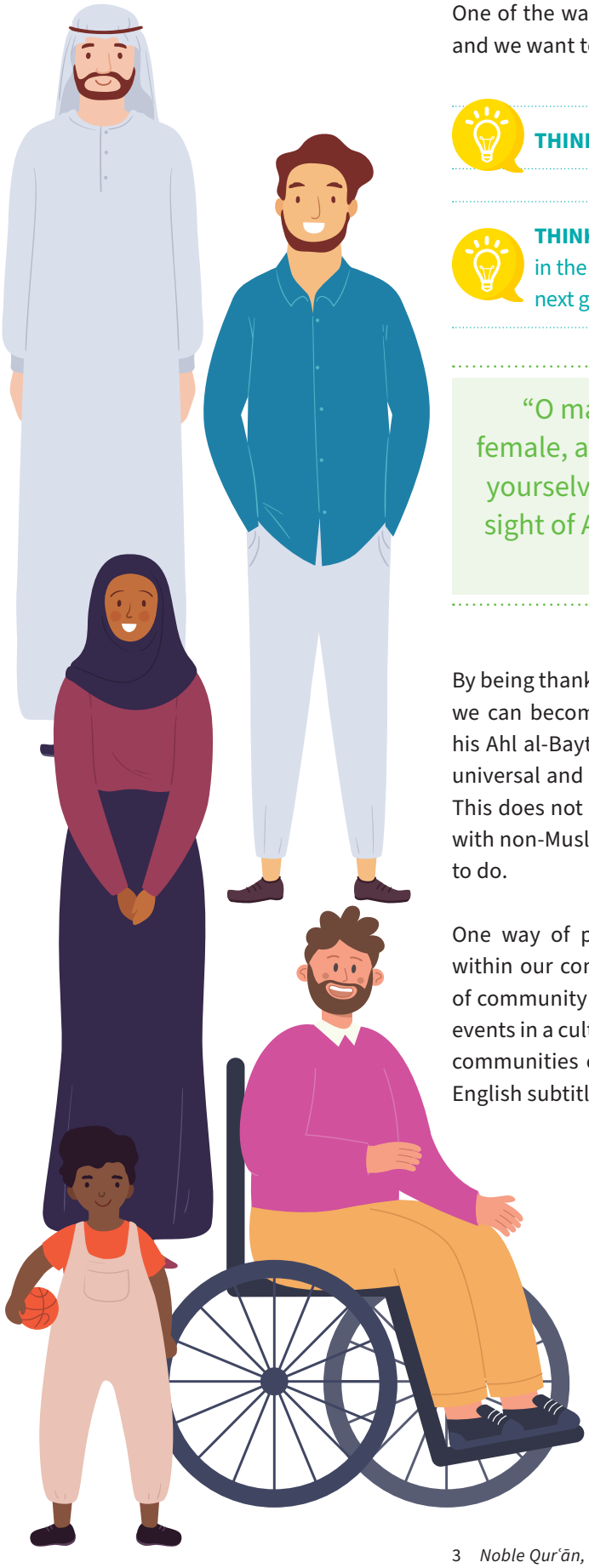
People present were taken by surprise, they thought that the poor man was a fool, but then he explained:

"O Prophet of Allah, I refuse to accept this offer because I fear that I might then become arrogant and ill-treat my Muslim brothers the way he did to me."

THINK ALOUD: The Prophet (ṣ) always spoke in a precise way. What do you think the Prophet (ṣ) was trying to have his companions realize by asking the rich man a question about his behavior publicly?

We will always come across people who are very different from us. From this story, we learn that it is important to not look at how someone's appearance is different from our own. We should not be overly focused on their external characteristics. Instead, as Allah (swt) and His Prophet (ṣ) have advised, we should focus on their good characteristics and taqwā (God-consciousness). When we are focused on our differences, especially outward measures like skin color and brand names, we can easily fall into the trap of arrogance and cultural prejudice.

One of the ways to address cultural prejudice within ourselves is to put ourselves in others' shoes. We may not realize that we feel arrogance about our culture, and unintentionally (like the man in the story above) show this in our actions. We should try to think about how the Ahl al-Bayt would act with others, especially with other Muslims.



One of the ways the Prophet (ṣ) brought people to Islam was through his character, and we want to conduct ourselves in the best way.

THINK ALOUD: How can you welcome someone new to your mosque?

THINK ALOUD: Let's say you welcomed someone who was new to your mosque in the last gathering you had at the mosque. Now, you see them again in the next gathering. What would be the most appropriate thing to do now?

> "O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed Allah is All-knowing, All-aware."[3]

By being thankful for the opportunity to interact with Muslims from different cultures, we can become better servants of Allah (swt), and learn from the Prophet (ṣ) and his Ahl al-Bayt's example. The Prophet (ṣ) always emphasized that his message was universal and that everybody could benefit from Islam by treating each other justly. This does not mean, however, that we compromise on our own beliefs if we interact with non-Muslims or people that do not practice what Allah (swt) has commanded us to do.

One way of practically applying these teachings and overcoming the prejudices within our communities towards people who look or act differently to the majority of community members is to try and accommodate others by holding programs and events in a culturally inclusive manner. For example, if everyone speaks English, some communities could benefit by holding English language programs, or try to create English subtitles for elegies (latmiyat/ nohay) that are being recited.

3 *Noble Qur'ān,* Al-Ḥujurāt, 49:13

Activity 1.2a: Review Questions

1. The Prophet (ṣ) preached that:

   a. Arabs should have priority over non-Arabs
   b. Men have more rights than women
   c. All people are equal, and we should only precedence according to faith

2. The Prophet (ṣ) taught that:

   a. We should enjoin good and forbid evil in any way we feel is right
   b. We should enjoin good and forbid evil but in the correct way as he did it
   c. We do not need to enjoin good and forbid evil, as long as we live a good life ourselves

3. Which of the following were close and loyal companions of the Prophet (ṣ) (there may be more than one answer)

   a. Salmān Al-Fārsi and ʿAmmār
   b. Abū Ḥurayrah and Abū Bakr
   c. Miqdād and Bilāl

CHAPTER 2

Lives of the Maʿṣūmīn (ʿa)

2.1 Imām ʿAlī's (ʿa) Strength & Submission

2.2 From Prophethood to Imāmah

2.3 Sayyidah Fāṭimah's (ʿa) Status

2.4 Imām al-Ḥasan's (ʿa) Bravery

2.5 Imām al-Ḥusayn's (ʿa) Supportive Character

2.6 Imām as-Sajjād's (ʿa) Early Years

2.7 Imām as-Sajjād (ʿa) in Shām

2.8 Imām as-Sajjād (ʿa): Reforming Hearts

2.9 Imām al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Early Years

2.10 Imām al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Imāmah

2.11 Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj)

2.1 Imām ʿAlī's (ʿa) Strength & Submission

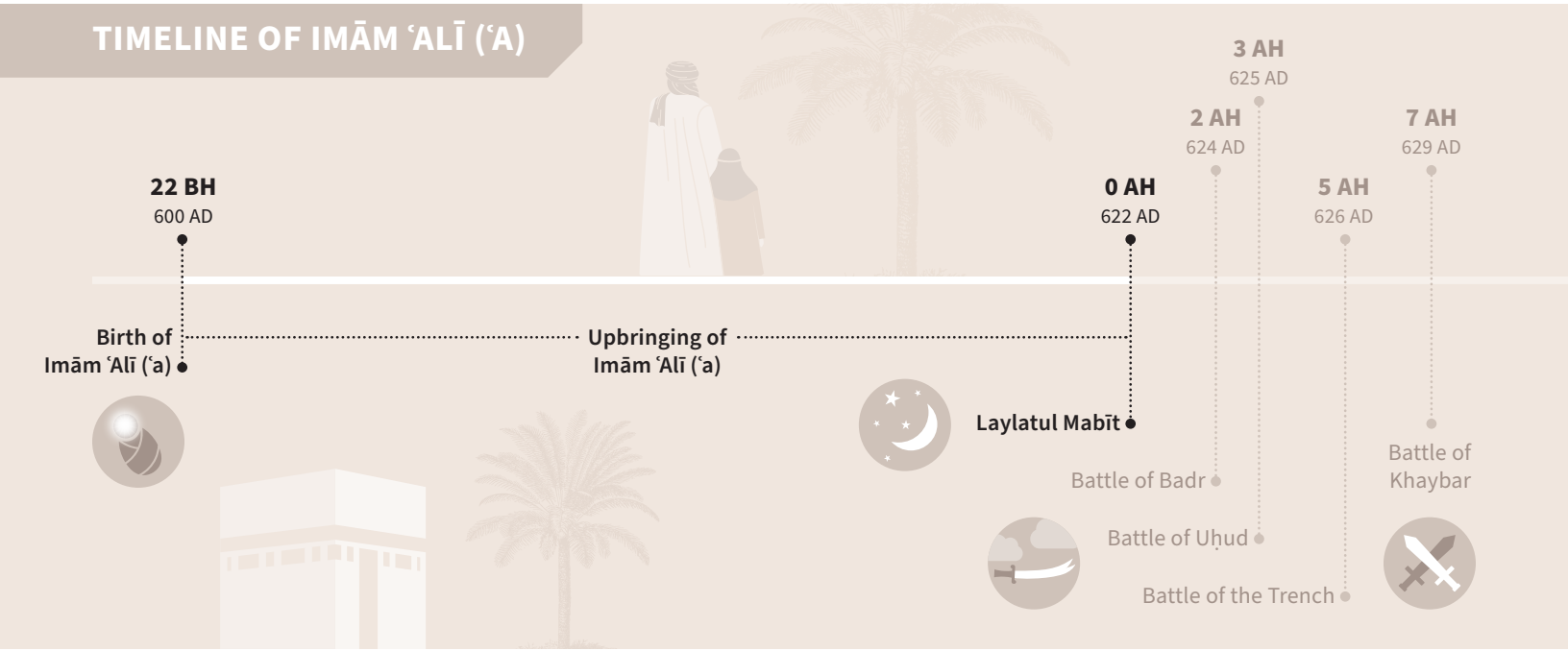
OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the circumstances surrounding the birth of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and how it was a miracle
- Analyze the importance of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) (ʿa) being raised by the Prophet (ṣ).
- Outline the events surrounding the invitation of the Prophet's (ṣ) family members to Islām.
- Analyze the actions of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) (ʿa) during Laylat ul-Mabīt.
- Explain how Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) demonstrated strength and submission by supporting the Prophet (ṣ) in various circumstances.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ʿALĪ (ʿA)

Name	ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib
Kunyah	Abū Al-Ḥasan, Abū Al-Ḥasanayn, Abū Turāb
Title	Amīr Al-Muʾminīn
Parents	Ḥaḍrat Abū Ṭālib and Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah bint Asad
Date of Birth	13th Rajab, 30 Ām ul-Fīl
Birthplace	Noble Kaʿbah, Mecca
Ring Inscription	اَلْمُلْكُ لِلّٰهِ الوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّار - The Kingdom belongs exclusively to Allah, the One, the Almighty
Number of Children	27
Duration of Imāmah	30 Years
Date of Martyrdom	Night of 21st Ramaḍan, 40 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Masjid Al-Kūfah
Cause of Martyrdom	Struck by Ibn Muljim while offering Fajr prayers
Lifespan	63 Years
Location of Shrine	Najaf Al-Ashraf

TIMELINE OF IMĀM ʿALĪ (ʿA)



A DIVINE BIRTH

On a Friday morning, on 13th day of Rajab, a pious woman — Haḍrat Fāṭimah bint Asad — made her way towards the Kaʿbah, praying out loud to Allah (swt). Suddenly, onlookers watched in awe as the walls of the Kaʿbah cracked open, allowing her to enter, and then closed behind her. People were unable to enter the Kaʿbah for the next three days. On the fourth day, Haḍrat Fāṭimah bint Asad emerged from the Kaʿbah, from the same crack that had split for her to enter, holding a precious baby boy in her arms.

According to some sources, when his father, Abū Ṭālib, found out about the birth of his son, he went to the Kaʿbah and asked Allah (swt) to inspire to him the name he would say to his son. As a result, Almighty Allah (swt) inspired him to name his newborn ʿAlī (ʿa). Immediately after that, Abū Ṭālib came out of the Holy Kaʿbah informing people of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) name, which means one who is high and superior.

Also, according to some sources, Lady Fāṭimah bint Asad says, "As I wanted to leave [the Kaʿbah], a voice called out to me, 'O Fāṭimah! Name him ʿAlī for surely he is ʿalī (exalted) and Allah the Exalted and Sublime says I have derived his name from My name, I have refined him with My adab (etiquette), and I have made him aware of the hidden treasures of My knowledge. He is the one who will break the idols in my house. He is the one who will recite the adhān on top of my house. He will sanctify me, glorify me, and testify to my oneness. He is the Imām after my beloved, my prophet and my choicest of all creation, Muḥammad, my Messenger, and his successor. So blessed be the one who loves him and helps him and woe be upon the one who disobeys him, disgraces him, and denies his right."

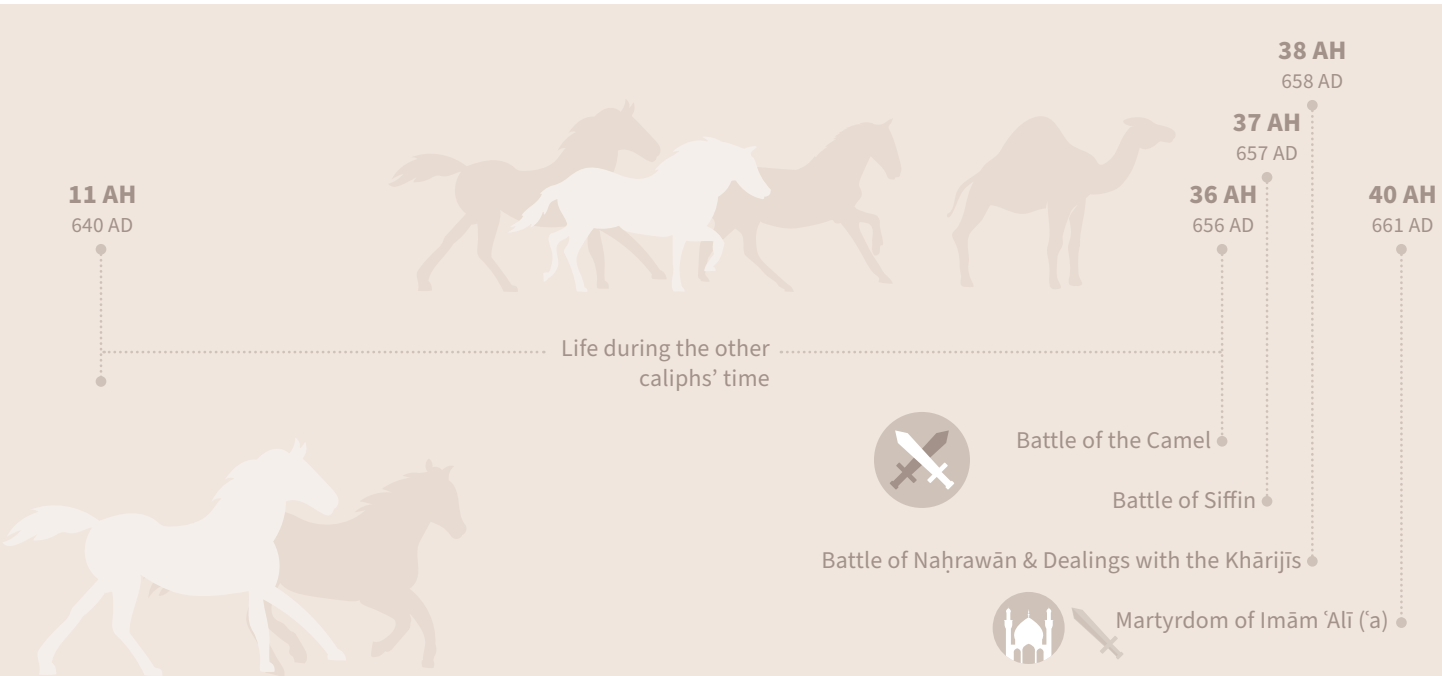
THINK ALOUD: When he was born, Allah (swt) had already chosen Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) as the successor of the Prophet (ṣ). What is the importance of people knowing this from the beginning?

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was born ten years before the mabʿath (delegation) of the Prophet (s). Six years later, when there was a drought in Mecca and Haḍrat Abū Ṭālib's financial position was not strong, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) asked him for permission to take Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) into his home and help raise him.

As Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) once said, "I have chosen to nurture that individual who Allah has chosen for me." This relationship was one that was loved and desired by Allah (swt). In fact, the Prophet (ṣ) also said that "Allah has created me and ʿAlī from the same one *nūr* (light)."

THINK ALOUD PREDICT: What do you think is the significance of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) being raised by the Prophet (ṣ)?

The life of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) can be divided into five periods: (1) Birth to Biʿthat, (2), Biʿthat to Ḥijrah, (3) Ḥijrah to Reḥlah, (4) Riḥlah to Khilāfah, and (5) Khilāfah to Shahādah.



THE BEST TARBIYAH

We can only imagine the type of childhood Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) had. He was nurtured by the Prophet (ṣ) of Allah (swt) himself! Sometimes the Prophet (ṣ) put him against his chest so he would sleep. He would even feed Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) with his own hands.

As an adult, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) once said, "I followed him (the Prophet (ṣ) wherever he went, just like a baby-camel follows its mother. Each day, I would learn about a new aspect of his character and akhlāq, and I would accept it and follow it like a command."[1]

The event where the Prophet (ṣ) received the command from Allah (swt) to begin his mission of Prophethood is known as the **biʿthah** (delegation). Upon sharing Allah's (swt) command with Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) became the first individual to embrace Islam openly at the young age of 10 years. From the first hours after the mabʿath up until the last moments of the Prophet's (ṣ) blessed life, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was at his side. Tirelessly, he struggled in the path of Allah (swt) to first establish Islam and then later safeguard it. When nobody else had the courage to act, it was ʿAlī (ʿa) that came forward. Even when the pressures on him were immense, he remained steadfast. Whatever he had, he gave in the path of raising the truth, and it is indeed through him that truth was kept alive.

Throughout his life, the Imām (ʿa) showed us how to submit to Allah (swt) in multiple ways – through obeying the command of the Prophet (ṣ) and acting in ways that showed his submission in extraordinary circumstances.

DAʿWAT DHŪʾL - ASHĪRA (INVITATION OF THE RELATIVES)

For the first three years of Islam, the Prophet (ṣ) was commanded by Allah (swt) not to spread Islam openly, but rather only to a small, close group of people. After three years, he then received the following command:

وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ

And warn your nearest relatives.[2]

Upon receiving this command, the Prophet (ṣ) called Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and said, "O ʿAlī! Please go purchase a sheep, some yogurt, and some wheat, and prepare a meal and invite all of our uncles!"

That evening, about 40 men from the Banī Hāshim gathered to enjoy a great feast. To their surprise, no matter how much food they took, it didn't decrease at all! After they ate to their heart's content, the Prophet (ṣ) wanted to speak to them. However, before he could deliver his message, his uncle Abū Lahab stood up and accused him of being a magician and then convinced everyone to leave. The next day, the same thing happened.

For the third day, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) prepared another feast and invited their uncles. This time, the Prophet (ṣ) immediately stood up and addressed his uncles. He told them that he had been entrusted by Allah (swt) to deliver the final religion — Islam. He said that Islam teaches us that there is no God but Allah (swt), and that everyone has been created equally as a servant of Allah (swt). He then asked, "Who amongst you will support me so that he can become my successor and khalīfah after me?"

At this point, only Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) stood up and said, "I will, O Prophet of Allah." Rasūlullāh (ṣ) asked him to sit back down and again asked the same question. Once more, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) stood up, and the Prophet (ṣ) asked him to sit. When he asked the question the third time, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) stood up once more, and this time the Prophet (ṣ) said,

"O ʿAlī, you will be my successor after me."

This was the first of many times where the Prophet (ṣ) publicly announced who his successor would be. The Prophet's family left the gathering laughing at how the Prophet (ṣ) had appointed a young successor.

In his early days, our first Imam (ʿa) dedicated himself to the task of spreading Islam and he became a pillar of support for the Prophet (ṣ). He was neither scared of the hardships nor the threats of the enemies of Islam.

1 *Nahj Al-Balāghah,* Ḥadīth# 192.

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ash-Shuʿarāʾh, 26:214

THINK ALOUD INFER: One of the arguments against Imām Alī (ʿa) being the successor of the Prophet (ṣ) was that he was too young compared to the other companions. How does the story above show that his age did not matter?

Time after time, the Prophet (ṣ) announced that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was his true successor. This story shows us that some of the Muslims knew, even before the event of Ghadīr Khumm, that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the successor of the Prophet (ṣ). Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was chosen by Allah (swt) to be the Imām, but the Prophet (ṣ) showed the status of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) at various events. This feast came to be known as the Daʿwah Dhul ʿAshīrah. After this event, the Prophet (ṣ) began spreading Islam openly throughout Mecca.

Many Arabs began accepting Islam, especially the poor and downtrodden, who found Islam's message of justice and equality appealing. Seeing how Islam was spreading, the Quraysh began to fear that they would lose their power and status. The earliest Muslims endured many hardships at the hands of the Quraysh to the extent that many of them had to migrate to Abyssinia — Ethiopia — and seek refuge there.[3]

LAYLAT UL-MABĪT

Finally, Islam began spreading to Medina, and a group of influential people from Medina invited the Prophet (ṣ) to come live among them and establish an Islamic government. The Quraysh devised a plan to murder the Prophet (ṣ). They decided that each tribe would send one person to the house of the Prophet (ṣ) the night he planned on leaving Mecca. They would kill the Prophet (ṣ) together, so that no one person or tribe could be blamed.

Allah (swt) informed the Prophet (ṣ) of the Quraysh's plan through **waḥī** (divine revelation) and the Prophet decided to migrate to Medina that night. He asked Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) to stay behind and sleep in his bed. Some time in the night, the group of men designated to kill the Prophet burst into the house. When they were about to attack the bed, they realized it was Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and not the Prophet (ṣ) sleeping there. They became angry and tried to track the Prophet's (ṣ) movements.

In later years, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said that he never slept as peacefully as he did that one night. Thanks to the help of Allah (swt) and loyalty of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), the Prophet (ṣ) was successfully able to leave Mecca and safely make it to Qubāʾ, a city on the outskirts of Medina.[4]

Whenever we are doing any action for the pleasure of Allah (swt), however difficult the situation becomes, we have to endeavour to make sure that our intention remains purely for the sake of Allah (swt) and not for our own good. Once we do this, Allah (swt) elevates our status and gives us the full reward of that action.

THINK ALOUD INFER: Where did Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) get the strength to complete this task from?

The true meaning of the word Islām is complete submission to what Allah (swt) wills, as opposed to our own desires. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) is the perfect example of true submission. This event, before the Muslims migrated to Medina, was just the start of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) (ʿa) demonstrating his submission to Allah (swt). In later years, we will learn how he displayed his submission and courage in battles and then after the Prophet's (ṣ) death, how he preserved true Islam during periods of unrest and chaos in the Muslim ummah.

3 *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 18, P. 191

4 *Al-Amālī Sheikh Aṭ-Ṭūsī,* P.466

Activity 2.1a: Review Question

1. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) once said, “I have chosen to nurture that individual who Allah has chosen for me.” Think about this statement. What does nurturing mean and why was it important that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) be nurtured by Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)?

2. All of the Prophet’s (ṣ) relatives were from which tribe?

   a. Quraysh
   b. Aws
   c. Khazraj

3. Imagine you are a relative of the Prophet that was invited to Daʿwat Dhūʾl - Ashīra. Before the Prophet (s) gave his speech, what do you imagine the atmosphere to be like? During the speech, are people attentive or dismissive? Create a short skit with your classmates reflecting on the event.

Worksheet 2.1b

Directions: Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Did the Prophet (ṣ) know that Imāmʿ Alī (ʿa) would be his successor before the event of Dhul Daʾwat Dhu ʾl-ʿAshira? How do you know?

2. In the event of Daʾwat Dhu ʾl-ʿAshira the Prophet (ṣ) announced that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) would be his successor by asking who would support him three times. Why do you think he would do this instead of announcing to his family who would be his successor?

3. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said that he slept the soundest on the night of Laylatul Mabīt. Why do you think he said that?

4. Using your answers above and what you know about the tarbiyah of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), and any other events from his life, explain why the status of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) would have been clear to the people.

Worksheet 2.1c

Short Answer: In the lesson we discuss that whenever we are doing any action for the pleasure of Allah (swt), however difficult the situation becomes, we have to endeavor to make sure that our intention remains purely for the sake of Allah (swt). How did Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) show that his actions were only for the sake of Allah (swt) on the night of the Ḥijrah?

Scenarios: Fill out the scenarios below for how people with a clouded intention can improve by following the example of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). Then, use the last two rows to identify a place in your daily routine where you have a clouded intention and how you can improve. Do not share this with others.

SCENARIO	CLOUDED INTENTION	HOW TO IMPROVE
Recitation of the Qurʾān	Someone likes to show off how good their recitation is, and so they recite it out loud anytime someone might be nearby,	Changing your intention to reciting for the sake of Allah (swt). If someone praises you, remember that your good voice and ability to recite was gifted by Allah (swt)
Eating a healthy diet	I want to people to praise me for how healthy the food I am eating is, so I eat very healthy	
Wearing nice, clean clothes		Muʾminīn should look nice for the sake of Allah (swt) and so that they represent their values well. So, they should remain neat and clean
Praying at mosque		

2.2 From Prophethood to Imāmah

OBJECTIVES:

- Outline the ways in which Islam is the complete and final religion until the Day of Judgment.
- Recognize the need for a divine guide who can help explain the religion to us, guide us, and be our role model, despite the fact that Islām has not changed and will not change
- Compare and contrast the perspectives on the leadership of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) held by various Muslims after the death of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)
- Identify that the Imāms (ʿa) have access to divine knowledge, and are nūrun wāḥid (one light).

In order for us to become closer to Allah (swt), He has given us a clear set of guidelines in the form of the divine religion. He has also sent Prophets to communicate these guidelines and explain them. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) was the final Prophet, and he brought the last and complete religion, Islam. However, what happens after the Prophets? Don't we need divine guides after the Prophets? Who will be our role models after Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) now that he is not alive and with us?

THE SHARĪʿAH (DIVINE LAW) IS COMPLETE

We have previously learned that Islam is a complete system of life and has told us everything that we need to become closer to Allah (swt). There is a famous ḥadīth that discusses this: "The ḥalāl of Muḥammad will be ḥalāl until the Day of Judgment, and the ḥarām of Muḥammad will be ḥarām until the Day of Judgment."[1]

What this means is that we will never need a new religion or a new set of instructions and guidelines — Islam is the best and most complete.

However, even though we have the complete religion, we still need a person who is the closest to Allah (swt) and can provide an explanation for the laws. We also need role models to help show us the way. So, even though we don't have new laws after the death of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), we still have divine leaders, known as the Imāms, who help us apply the laws and guidelines.

AFTER THE PROPHET (Ṣ)

After Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) passed away, the Muslims split over who they wanted to lead the Muslim community. Throughout the Prophet's (ṣ) life, he was extremely close to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and even raised him in his home when he was a young child. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first Muslim and person to believe in the Prophet's (ṣ) message, even though he was a young man at the time. The Prophet (ṣ) would teach him everything that was revealed to him from Allah (swt), and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) learned the complete religion of Islam and the entire interpretation of the Qurʾān directly from the Prophet (ṣ).

Near the end of the Prophet's (ṣ) life, he gathered all of the Muslims near a place called Ghadīr Khumm. He told them that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was their leader and master and that when he passed away, the Muslim ummah had to hold onto two things: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). He raised Imām ʿAlī's (ʿa) hand in the sky, and on that day, many Muslims gave their allegiance to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and congratulated him on the status that he had earned. This wasn't the only time that the Prophet (ṣ) made it clear that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was meant to be the divine guide after he passed away.

1 *Uṣūl Al-Kāfī*, V. 1, P. 58

Imām Ali's (ʿa) job was to guide and continue the message that had been brought and to explain, clarify, and lead the Muslims.

However, when the Prophet (ṣ) passed away, the Muslims became divided. Some appointed the leader that they wanted instead of following what the Prophet (ṣ) had said. Before the Prophet (ṣ) was buried, a few influential individuals gathered together and decided that Abū Bakr would lead the Muslim ummah. They believed that there was no need for a divinely appointed leader; they could just choose the new leader, since they already had the final religion of Islam. They felt like the Qurʾān and sunnah (traditions) were enough of a guide, and the Muslims just needed a political leader without the same special spiritual qualifications that a Prophet had.

The majority of Muslims decided to follow Abū Bakr and he became the khalīfah, the political leader of the Muslims. This group of Muslims later on came to be known as the Sunnīs.

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) informed those whom they could that what they were doing was incorrect and not what Allah (swt) wanted, but very few people supported them and decided not to fight for this divine command. When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) saw that people did not want to follow him, he did not force them, even though they were wrong. He wanted them to become truly guided, but the Muslim Ummah was very fragile, and he could not do anything that would lead to the destruction of the Ummah. But he and the other Imāms continued to guide the Muslims as role models, and explained the laws of Islam and taught them the knowledge of the Qurʾān.

Even though they did not have the political power that Allah (swt) wanted them to have and had appointed for them, the Imāms always helped the Muslim ummah and guided them.

We always need a role model and a leader who has the highest of spiritual qualifications so that they can guide and lead us to becoming as close as we can to Allah (swt), and to help us practice all of the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, we always need that connection and access to divine knowledge. The Imāms are that connection to Allah (swt) and Prophethood and all of the knowledge necessary for our guidance. This is the role of Imāmah.

THE DIVINE GUIDES

The group of Muslims that believed divine leaders had been appointed even after Prophethood was completed are we — the Shīʿāh! We have twelve Imāms as our divine leaders, beginning with Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). These 12 divine leaders hold the highest rank amongst the divine leaders — Imāmah. They are not Prophets, but have reached a spiritual status that can be higher than some of the Prophets other than Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). Even though the Imāms do not bring any new laws from Allah (swt), they teach, implement, and guide us to follow the perfect religion brought by Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

As we mentioned earlier, the Prophet (ṣ) himself told us about the important role of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). This narration says that he was leaving behind two very weighty (i.e. valuable) resources: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), and that these two would jointly guide the Muslim ummah until the Day of Judgment. He then said that whoever follows these two resources will always remain on the right path!

This ḥadīth is known as Ḥadīth ath-Thaqalayn, and it has been narrated in many of our oldest books by all Muslims. It has been recorded in both Sunnī and Shīʿah books.

After the Prophet (ṣ) gave this sermon, Allah (swt) revealed the final verse of the Qurʾān and said that it was on that day that He had "perfected your religion for you" and that He had "completed [His] blessing" on us and "approved Islam as [our] religion."[2]

From this event, the Prophet's (ṣ) words and the revelation of this verse, we can see that Imāmah is a very important part of Islam. In fact, it is so important that Islam was complete only after Allah (swt) introduced the concept of Imāmah.

Before we learn about the lives of these Imāms (ʿa) we must first understand one very important point. Although the Imāms (ʿa) are 12 different individuals, they are nūrun wāḥid[3]; they are 'one light'.

This means that each noble Imām (ʿa) (ʿa) lived during different times and circumstances, but he acted in the same way as any other Imām would if he were in that circumstance. For example, if Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) was in the place of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), he, too, would have made a treaty, rather than fight. The circumstances that Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) were in differed, which is why they responded differently. Their knowledge is from Allah (swt), and thus, it is perfect. They did not act on their own desires, but rather, they acted according to the will of Allah (swt). The Imāms (ʿa) all share a common goal — to guide us towards our purpose — and each Imām (ʿa) performed those actions and laid the foundation to help the others achieve this goal.

Keeping this in mind, we can view the 260 years from the Imāmah of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) to the shahādah of Imām Al-ʿAskarī as one continuous span. This itself is one of the miracles of Imāmah. These were 12 separate individuals, yet throughout the span of their 260 years, there were no contradictions between the decisions or actions of any of the Imāms.

IMĀMAH AND KHILĀFAH

It's important to understand the distinction between Imāmah and khilāfah. As we know, there must always be a divine guide on the earth to be the connection between us and Allah (swt). Logically, we can come to the conclusion that the person who is infallible is the best fit to lead the ummah, both religiously, socially, and politically, like the Imāms. This is one of the responsibilities of the Imām, but most of our Imāms were not able to lead politically and openly, because people sought this power for themselves.

Political leadership is called the khilāfah — caliphate — and the political ruler is called the khalīfah — or caliph. This is why when we talk about the first four caliphs, or say that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the fourth khalīfah, it means that he became the fourth of the political rulers after the death of the Noble Prophet (ṣ). The right to rule — or the right to be khalīfah — was always with the Imāms (ʿa), but we say that other people were khalīfahs because in history, they were the political rulers.

This span of 260 years of Imāmah can be divided into four periods:

1. The Period of Patience and Standing Firm (25 Years): Riḥlah of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) until Khilāfah of Amīr Al-Muʾminīn
2. The Age of Reaching Power: Khilāfah of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) (4 years and 9 months) and Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) (6 months and 3 days)
3. Creating a Foundation for an Islamic Government: Treaty of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) to Shahādah of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa)
4. Long-term Preparation for an Islamic Government: Shahādah of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) until the Dhuhūr of Imām Az-Zamān (ʿa)

CONCLUSION

It is clear that divine guides play a significant role in helping us become closer to Allah (swt). Without these divine guides, we would not have continued guidance on how to make good choices and follow Allah's (swt) commands completely. After the Prophet (ṣ) revealed the final religion of Islam, the Imāms (ʿa) are our divine leaders who continue to explain the divine message and divine religion. They teach us about Islam and help us to remain steady on the right path. They also serve as role models and help guide and teach us to become as spiritually close to Allah (swt) as we can be. Following in their footsteps is following in the footsteps of the Prophet (ṣ) towards Allah (swt).

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

3 *Ziyārah Jāmiʿah Kabīrah*

Homework Activity 2.2a

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. The following verse was revealed on the Day of Ghadīr. What does it tell us about Imāmah?

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمَ دِينًا

Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.[4]

2. Shīʿas and Sunnīs have different beliefs about Imāmah. What is the difference and why do the Shīʿas believe in the necessity of Imāmah?

3. What happened after the Prophet (ṣ) died? What did Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) do and why didn't he take his right of becoming the khalīfah?

4. Why do we need Imāms after the Prophets?

5. What are the thaqalayn? When did the Prophet tell us what this is?

6. What is the difference between a divinely-appointed leader and a leader that we choose?

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

2.3 Sayyidah Fāṭimah's (ʿa) Status

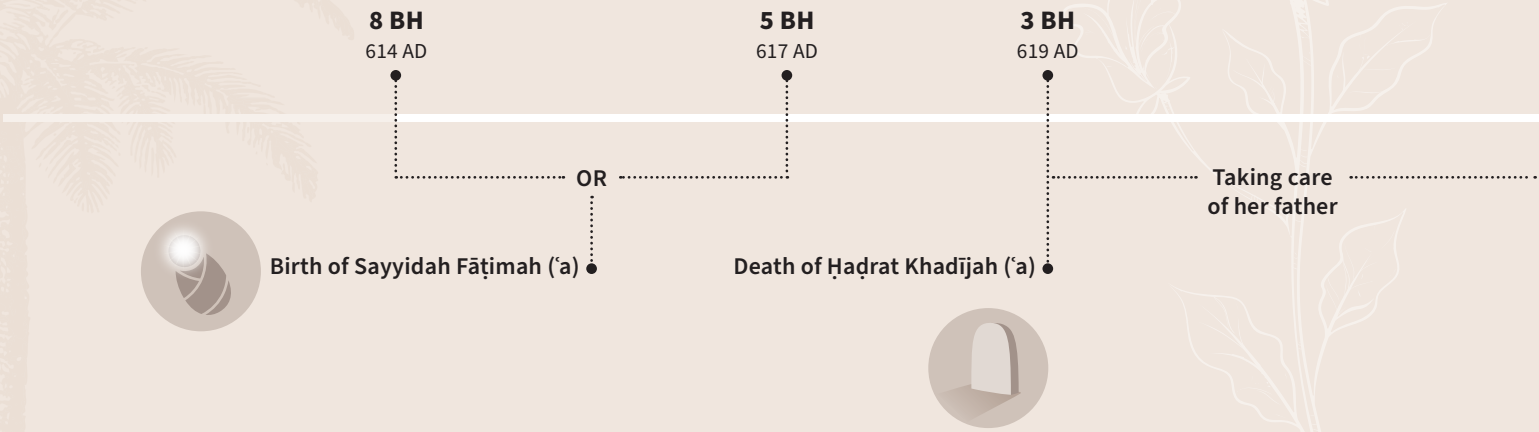
OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the circumstances surrounding the birth of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) and her status in the eyes of Allah (swt)
- Outline the ways in which Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) showed her love for her father Rasūlullāḥ (ṣ) by supporting him
- Develop strategies to show love toward Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)
- Outline the events surrounding the invitation of the Prophet's (ṣ) family members to Islām.

AN OVERVIEW OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH (ʿA)

Name	Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad
Kunyah	Umm Abīhā; Umm al-Aʾimmah
Title	Az-Zahrāʾ; Al-Batūl
Parents	Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and Haḍrat Khadījah bint Khuwaylid
Date of Birth	20 Jumādā ath-Thānī, 5BH or 8BH
Birthplace	Mecca
Number of Children	5
Date of Martyrdom	13 Jumāda al-Ūlā, 11 AH or 3 Jumādā ath-Thānī, 11AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina
Cause of Martyrdom	Struck by a burning door & inflicted with other injuries
Lifespan	18 Years
Location of Shrine	Medina (unknown location)

TIMELINE OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH (ʿA)



THE BIRTH OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH (ʿA)

Sayyidah Fāṭimah Az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa) was born on the 20 Jamādī ath-Thānī in the fifth year or the eighth year before the Ḥijrah. She was a light, born to the best parents. Her father was the best man to exist on this earth — Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), and her mother was one of the 4 women of Paradise — Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa). When Sayyidah Fāṭimah's (ʿa) birth was to take place, the Prophet (ṣ) told Khadījah (ʿa), "Jabrāʾīl has given me the good news that this child will be a daughter and all of the pure Imāms will be of her descendants."

When the enemies of the Prophet (ṣ) found out that he had a son, Qāsim, who passed away at a very young age, they mocked him by calling him abtar, which means an animal without a tail, and was used to refer to someone who has no male children. This is when Allah (swt) revealed Sūrah Al-Kawthar, and said "Indeed We have given you abundance."

In this Sūrah, one understanding of abundance — Kawthar — is that it means an abundance of goodness in Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) and her descendants. In the same Sūrah, Allah (swt) contrasts this by saying, "Indeed it is your enemy who is without descendants."

In these lessons, Sayyidah Fāṭimah's (ʿa) life will be divided into three periods:

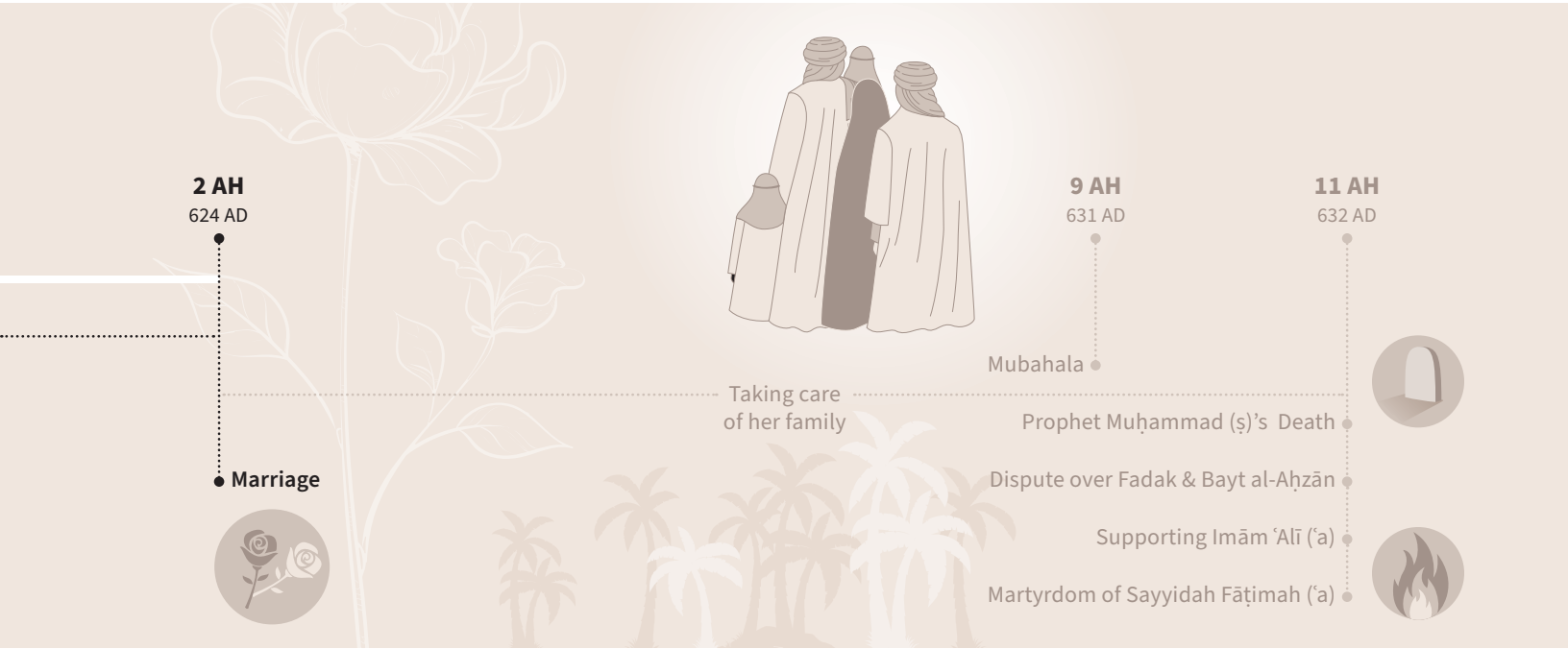
- Her birth until her marriage which includes her mother's death
- From her marriage until the riḥlah (death) of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)
- The riḥlah until her own shahādah

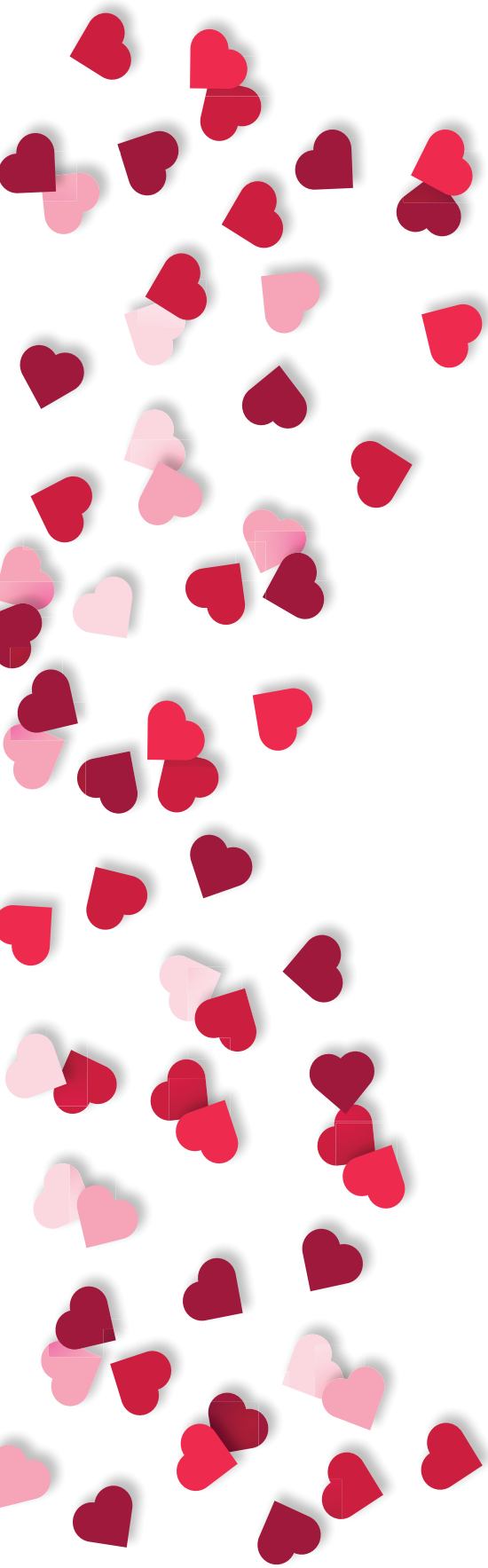
UMM ABĪHĀ

As a child, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was very close to both of her parents, Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa) and Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). Growing up she heard the recitation of Qurʾān from the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and learnt it by heart. She saw the love of her parents for one another. She saw how her mother supported the Prophet (ṣ) in spreading Islam, even when the enemies of Islam rejected him and made his life difficult.

Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa) often became hungry herself whilst providing for others. When they finally returned to their home from the exile that the Muslims were subjected to, Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa) became ill and passed away. Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was only about three or six years old. During this time Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) missed her mother very much, and she was almost inconsolable. Angel Jibrāʾīl came to speak to the Prophet and consoled Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) through the Prophet (ṣ).

THINK ALOUD: How did the death of Lady Khadījah (ʿa) impact Rasūlullāh and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)?





After the death of her mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) looked after her father's well-being. Even after the boycott, when the Muslims returned to Mecca, the streets were full of those who insulted the Prophet (ṣ) and threw trash on him.

When her father returned home injured and wounded, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) would wash the blood off his noble face, dress his wounds, and encourage him with her words. These were the times when her father was a stranger in his own land and among his own people. He was all alone during his struggle and fight against ignorance and he was carrying the heavy responsibility of spreading Islam by himself.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) consoled the heart of her father with her sincere love and affection. Like her mother, she had the status of her father in the eyes of Allah (swt), and wanted to help him in whatever way she could. This was the reason why the Prophet (ṣ) used to say, "May your father sacrifice his life for you" and call her the "mother of her father" — Umm Abīhā. The same way her mother saw her responsibility during great difficulties, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was a comfort to her father in all times.

One of the lessons we learn from the life of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) is that of practicing goodness to parents. To show our love to Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), we can love and respect our parents, even when it may be very difficult.

After the passing away of Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa), another trial of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was when the Noble Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to migrate to Medina — the ḥijrah. In his absence, he requested Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) to sleep on his bed while his house was surrounded by his enemies. Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was also present in the house, but in no way did she express any fear or alarm. She spent the night in the remembrance of Allah (swt).

In the next few days, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was asked to bring Sayyidah Fāṭimah Az-Zahrā (ʿa) his mother Fāṭimah bint Asad, and another lady named Fāṭimāh bint Az-Zubayr to Medina. During their migration to Medina, the enemies of the Muslims chased their group, but the group constantly remained in the remembrance of Allah (swt) while pursuing their journey.

Arriving to the outskirts of Medina almost two weeks after the night that he had slept in the bed of the Prophet (ṣ), Imam Ali (ʿa) found the Prophet (ṣ) waiting for the group, anticipating the arrival of his daughter Sayyidah Fāṭimah Az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa). A special verse had been revealed for the occasion:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

> "And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is most kind to [His] servants."[1]

1 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:207

SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH'S (ʿA) MARRIAGE

Many people had aspired to marry Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), but the Prophet (ṣ) received revelations that each of these proposals should be rejected, as these men were not a match for the the īmān of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa).

Many of these men wanted to marry her to increase their own status in society, but only Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was fit for this role.

THINK ALOUD: How could marrying Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) increase someone's status in the society at that time?

In Islam, faith and character is valued, and in this respect there was no match better than that of Imām ʿAlī (ṣ) for Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa). Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said,

> "If ʿAlī (ʿa) was not created, there would be no equal for Fāṭimah (ʿa)."

After the Battle of Badr, she was married to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), on the 1st of Dhul Ḥijjah, 2AH. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) sold his armor to afford a simple dowry of Sayyidah Fātimah (ʿa). We see from this that she was the best woman and she was satisfied with simplicity.

Once, the Noble Prophet (ṣ) came to his daughter's house and asked his son-in-law: "How did you find your wife?" Imām ʿAlī (ṣ) replied: "I found her to be the best helper in worship of God."[2]

STATUS OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH (ʿA)

According to a ḥadīth of the Prophet (ṣ), Allah (swt) has promised that whenever Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) becomes angry at someone, God Himself shall be angry at that person, and whoever loves and obeys her, Allah (swt) will love that person.[3]

Having love for her is so important that it will save us from the fire of Hell. Love is enough to help us stop doing bad things. To understand love in such a case, we can break it up into types of love that reflect our devotion to her. For example, we can have:

- Love in the form of obedience for Allah (swt)
- Love in terms of hating her enemies
- Love in the form of respect for her status
- Love in the form of imitation: we should take her as a role model and perform the virtuous actions that she performed
- Love in the form of charity: to do practical acts of kindness which she used to do

2 *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 43, P. 117

3 *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 43, Ch. 8, P. 220

BRAINSTORM: Outline some ways in which you can implement the different types of love at the end of the lesson in your weekly routine. It can start with something small, like reciting the tasbīḥ every day.

Activity 2.3a: Scenarios

Directions: Individually or with a partner, write what advice you would give to the person in each example on how to do the right thing in this situation, following in the footsteps of Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa) (ʿa). Which kind of love for her are they showing by taking your advice?

1. Ali and Taha are late to soccer practice. They are walking on a very narrow sidewalk when a man in a wheelchair starts coming towards them. There isn't enough space for him to pass both of them, and they'll need to walk backwards or stand sideways to let him pass, which will make them miss the best part of practice, or they can ask him to wait while they cross him.

   a. What should they do?

   b. What kind of love for Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) will they be showing by doing this? Note there are multiple answers.

2. Surah sees her popular non-Muslim classmate ripping out a page of the Qurʿān and crumpling it up, despite knowing it is part of the religious book for Muslims. Saying something to that girl might lead to all of Surah's friends ignoring her if the popular girl tells them to.

a. What should Surah do?

b. What kind of love will she be showing for Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)? Note there are multiple answers.

3. Nadia has to make a difficult decision. The local school she is supposed to start at in the Fall does not allow students to wear hijab as part of their uniform rules. Her parents tried to have a lawyer talk to them, but the country's laws allow her school to keep this rule. Most of Nadia's friends decided to go to this school, so going to a different school will be very hard and she will feel very lonely without her friends. She'll also have to take a 30 minute bus to the other school that allows hijab.

   a. How can she apply one of the types of love above? What is the right decision to make here?

2.4 Imām Al-Ḥasan's (ʿa) Bravery

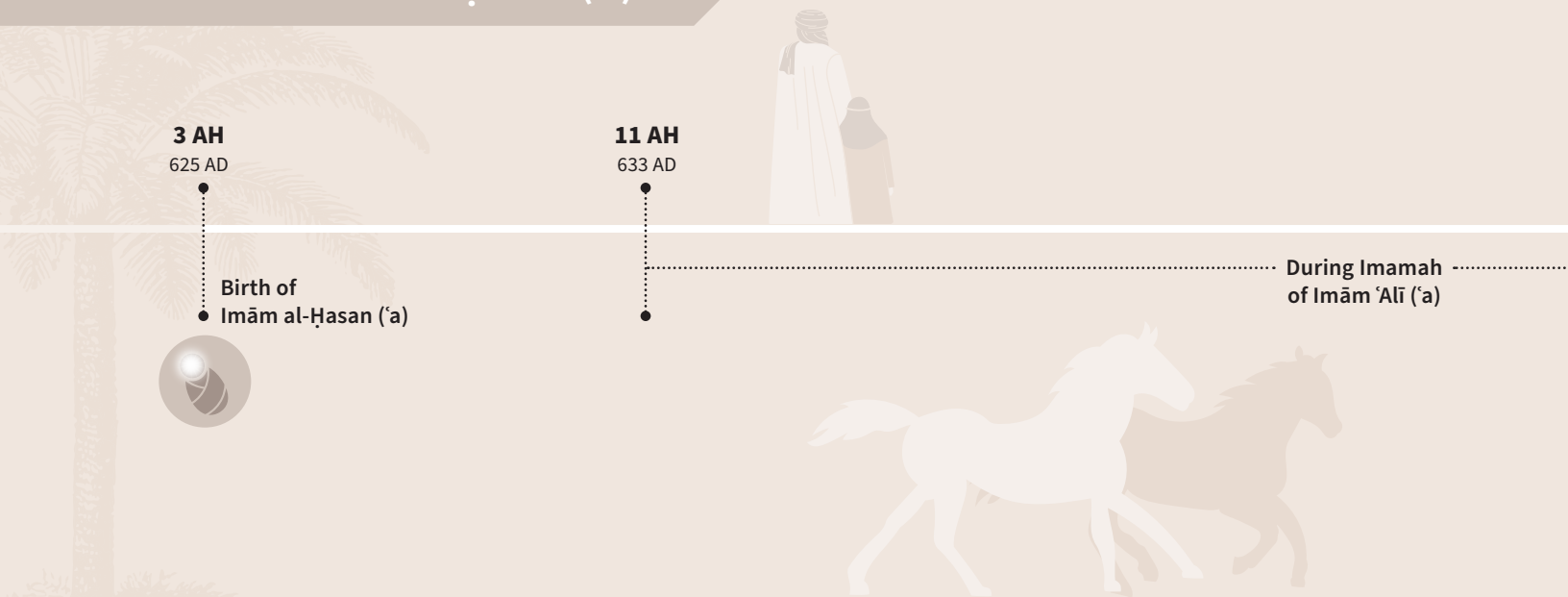
OBJECTIVES:

- Explain the difficulties of the first 37 years of Imām Al-Ḥasan's (ʿa) life.
- Analyze the position that Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) had in the eyes of the Prophet (ṣ), and how that informs us of his status as an inerrant guide.
- Outline the various ways in which Imām Ḥasan showed courage during his Imāmah by acting with wisdom when faced with very difficult decisions
- Answering some of the accusations made against Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and showing them to be false

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA)

Name	Al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib
Kunyah	Abū Muḥammad
Title	Al-Mujtabā (The Chosen One)
Parents	Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)
Date of Birth	15th Ramaḍān, 3 AH
Birthplace	Mecca, Saudi Arabia
Duration of Imāmah	10 years
Date of Martyrdom	28th Ṣafar, 50 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina
Cause of Martyrdom	Poisoned by his wife (upon the order of Muʿāwiyah)
Lifespan	47 Years
Location of Grave	Jannat ul-Baqī, Medina

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-ḤASAN (ʿA)



Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) is the first grandson of the Prophet (ṣ) and the first child born to Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). He lived at the same time as his grandfather and mother for seven years before they both passed away. When he was 37 years of age, his father Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was killed. By the command of Allah (swt), Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) became the next Imām. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) was poisoned at the age of 47 years.[1]

IMĀM ḤASAN'S (ʿA) BIRTH | 3 AH

Imām Ḥasan Al-Mujtabā (ʿa) was the first child of Amīr Al-Muʾminīn and Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa). He was born on the night of Tuesday, the 15th of the month of Ramaḍān in the year 3 AH. At his birth, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) asked Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to name the baby. He said, "I will not precede the Rasūlullāh (ṣ) in naming him."

When the Prophet (ṣ) came, he asked Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), "Have you named him?" Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) (ʿa) responded, "I will not precede you in naming him!"

"And I will not precede my Nurturer, the Powerful and Sublime, in naming him," said the Prophet (ṣ).

Then Allah (swt) revealed to the Angel Jabrāʾīl that a son has been born to Muḥammad (ṣ), so go down and give him my salām and congratulations. And say to him, "Surely ʿAlī is to you in the same way that Hārūn was to Mūsā. So name him with the name of the son of Harūn."

"What is his name?" asked the Prophet (ṣ) when Angel Jabrāʾīl conveyed this message.

"Shabbar," replied Angel Jabrāʾīl. However, this name was not an Arabic name.

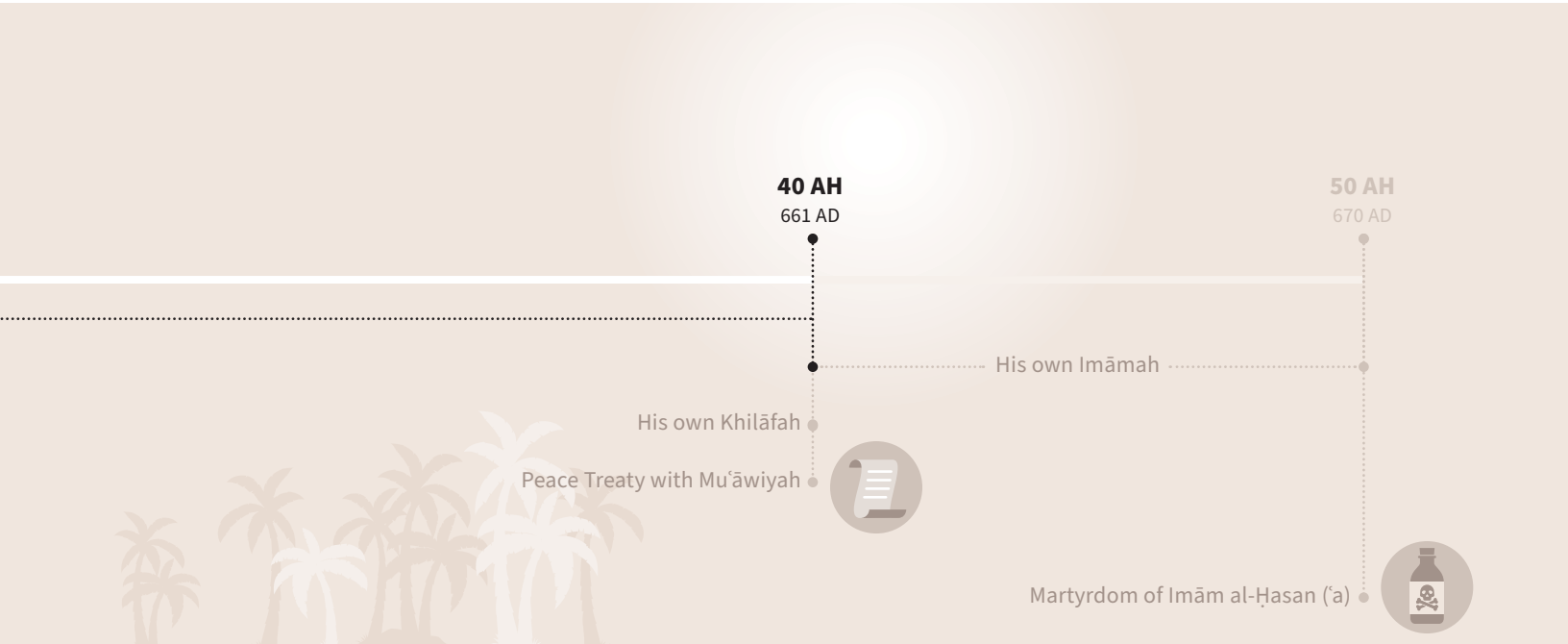
"My language is Arabic!" said the Prophet (ṣ). "Name him Al-Ḥasan!" was the reply.[2]

IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA) DURING THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ʿALĪ (ʿA) | 30 YEARS

After Rasūlullāh (ṣ) passed away, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) became the divinely appointed leader of the Muslim ummah. As we learned in the previous chapter, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the rightful successor of the Prophet (ṣ), but was denied his position of political leadership. During these difficult years, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) stood by his father and supported him in every way.

1 References:
- *Ṣulḥ Al-Ḥasan*, Shaykh Radi Al-Yasin
- eHawza, Semester 1, Course 2, Lecture 6
- Imām Ḥasan *'The Myths of his Divorces'*, Sayed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/default.asp?url=Imāmhasan.htm)
- Lectures by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi delivered 15th Ramadhan 1418 and 1420 on al-Islam.org

2 *Biḥār Al-Anwār*, V. 43, P. 238



After the Prophet (ṣ) passed away, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) would go door-to-door with his mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), reminding people about the promise they had made to Rasūlullāh (ṣ) at Ghadīr Khumm to follow Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) as his successor. He witnessed the tyrants oppressing his mother, the daughter of Rasūlullāh (ṣ), and treating her poorly. During these very difficult times, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) remained a firm pillar of courage and steadfastness.

As a child, the young Imām (ʿa) would learn not only from his grandfather, but also from his father and mother. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) would use this knowledge to debate with others and teach them about Islam. Sometimes, when the first and second khalīfahs would turn to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) for answers to difficult questions, he would direct them to Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), who was only a child, but possessed deep knowledge of Islam.

THE BRAVERY OF IMĀM AL-ḤASAN (ʿA)

History clearly shows that Imām Al-Ḥasan was a fearless warrior. He played important roles in the Muslim conquest of Persia and in the wars of Jamal and Ṣiffīn.

In the Battle of Ṣiffīn, the right wing of the army was under the command of Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imām Al-Husayn (ʿa).

During the battle, when Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) faced one of the commanders of the Syrian army in combat, the man refused to fight. He said, "I saw the Prophet (ṣ) on a camel while you were sitting in front of him. I don't want to meet the Prophet (ṣ) having your blood on my hands [if I fight you]."

THINK ALOUD: Did this man recognize the true status of Imām Al-Ḥasan? What are some reasons that someone can recognize the love of the Prophet for Imām Al-Ḥasan yet continue to fight for Muʿāwiyah?

Muʿāwiyah sent ʿUbaydullāh bin ʿUmar to try and incite the second Imām during the Battle of Ṣiffīn by saying, "Stop supporting your father, and we will make you the caliph. The Quraysh do not like your father, who is responsible for killing many of their elders, but they are prepared to accept you as their leader."

Imām Al-Ḥasan refused their request, saying, "The Quraysh wanted to destroy Islam, whereas my father killed their elders for Allah and for Islam. This is the basis of why they hate my father!"

When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) wanted to prepare an army for the Battle of Jamal, he sent Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) to Kūfah to raise an army. When Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) went to Kūfah he delivered a powerful and eloquent speech, after which twelve thousand men joined Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) for the battle.

Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) was 37 years old when his father was martyred. During the 30 years he spent under the Imāmah of his father, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) he had observed key

leadership skills, such as remaining patient and ruling justly, that would be vital when he would be khalīfah. He had been given the divine skills to lead.

THINK ALOUD: A leader cannot rule without wisdom in decision-making and without justice. What do you think happens when leaders don't have these two traits?

THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA): A DIVINE DECREE

The Imāmah of Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) (as is the case with all of the twelve Imāms) was a divine decree of Allah (swt) that the Prophet (ṣ) emphasised in his life on a number of occasions. On one occasion the Prophet (ṣ) said:

"I am worthier of the believers than themselves, then my brother ʿAlī bin Abi Talib will be worthier of the believers than themselves. If he is martyred then his son Al-Ḥasan will be worthier of the believers than themselves; then after him al-Ḥusayn will be worthier of the believers than themselves..."[3]

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA)

Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) lived at a time of great problems within the Muslim community. Muʿāwiyah, an enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt was trying to take full control of the Muslim world. His main strategy to discredit the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) was to try to hurt the reputation of the Imām (ʿa) through false accusations and rumors. Some of these were spread widely and persist until today.

THINK ALOUD: How did spreading rumours about the Imāms make Muʿawiyah's position as caliph stronger? Why were people so quick to believe these rumours?

After the death of the Prophet (ṣ), the ummah was very divided. Anyone who had power and wealth could easily convince people to follow them, especially if they claimed to be more righteous than others.

Our Imāms' (ʿa) excellent character and good morals made people naturally inclined to follow them, so their enemies started to create doubt about their character.

Another factor that affected Muʿāwiyah being able to spread these rumours so quickly was the way news was communicated at that time. People relied on word of mouth, and those living in Syria were far from both Medina and Kufa, where Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and his family lived.

Muʿāwiyah paid people to pretend they had met the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and tell others that the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) were mean, had bad conduct, or had even committed sins publicly. Since most people had not met the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), when they heard so many of these false reports from those who claimed to have met the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), they would believe them and even spread these false reports themselves. For example, it is reported that Muʿāwiyah offered 100,000 dirhams to Samūrah bin Jundab so that he would deliver a sermon to the Syrian people and fabricate a tradition saying that the following verses of Qurʾān are regarding Imām ʿAlī (ʿa):

"Among the people is he whose talk about worldly life impresses you, and he holds Allah witness to what is in his heart, though he is the staunchest of enemies. If he were to wield authority, he would try to cause corruption in the land and to ruin the crop and the stock, and Allah does not like corruption."[4]

At first, Samūrah refused. Muʿāwiyah then offered him 200,000 dirhams, and then 300,000 dirhams, but he still didn't accept. But finally, when Muʿāwiyah offered him 400,000 dirhams, he accepted.[5]

THINK ALOUD: To this day, 'fake news' spreads easily. What are some ways of discerning the difference between true and false reports?

3 *Biḥār Al-Anwār*, V. 36 P. 231

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:204-205

5 *Sharḥ Nahj Al-Balāghah*, V. 4 P. 73

ACCUSATION: IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA) WAS NOT A COURAGEOUS IMĀM

It is clear from history that Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) was ready to fight Muʿāwiyah and in fact had prepared an army to do so. Imām Ḥasan's (ʿa) intention to fight was to uproot evil and establish the true teachings of the Qur'ān and the Prophet (ṣ). Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) had a lot of experience in battle, and he had fought many battles alongside his father Imām ʿAlī (ʿa).

Courage is required to perform what is most righteous, regardless of what people say or do to oppose you. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) knew that a war was not the best thing for the Muslims under those circumstances, even though many of the people who remained in his army wanted to fight. Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) was courageous enough to insist on peace even though he knew that many people would accuse him of weakness and even disbelief!

After his truce with Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa), Muʿāwiyah was worried about the Khawārij. Under the leadership of someone called Ḥawtharah Al-Asadī, the Khawārij of Kufah were preparing an army to fight Muʿāwiyah. In order to try to show people that Imam Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) was his obedient follower, Muʿāwiyah sent him a message asking him to be in charge of defeating the uprising.

Imām Al-Ḥasan responded in a harsh message, "By Allah, I barely held back from fighting you in order to spare the blood of the Muslims. Should I fight people on your behalf when, by Allah, you deserve to be fought more than they?"

These examples show us that true courage goes beyond battles or events that require warfare.

THINK ALOUD: Why does it require courage to act with wisdom? How did our Imāms (ʿa) embody this?

Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) made it clear to Muʿāwiyah that entering into the truce did not mean that he accepted Muʿāwiyah as a leader. Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) would continue to do what was correct in any situation despite Muʿāwiyah's wishes.

Activity 2.4a: Review Questions

1. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) signed a peace treaty because:
   a. He wanted to prevent further bloodshed of true believers
   b. He wanted to expose Muʿāwiyah
   c. Both of the above

2. Why did the Prophet (ṣ) emphasize his love for Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) so much?

3. Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) was how old when the Prophet (ṣ) and his mother (ʿa) passed away?
   a. About 4 years old
   b. About 8 years old
   c. About 11 years old
   d. None of the above

4. How did Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) support his father (ʿa) during his Imāmah?

5. What are some important skills Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) learned from his father (ʿa) that prepared him to become the Imām?

6. The Prophet (ṣ) said, *"I am worthier of the believers than themselves, then my brother ʿAlī bin Abi Talib will be worthier of the believers than themselves. If he is martyred then his son Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) will be worthier of the believers than themselves; then after him Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) will be worthier of the believers than themselves..."*[6]

   Is the order of the names important in this ḥadith? Why did the Prophet (ṣ) include himself in the beginning?

6 *Biḥār Al-Anwār* V. 36, P. 231

Activity 2.4b: Wisdom in Speech

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was known for his wisdom and courage. One example of this is when visitors from Damascus or surrounding areas, often victim to lies and rumors spread by Muʿāwiyah, would curse and insult him to his face. Muʿāwiyah paid people to pretend they had met the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and tell others that the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) were mean, had bad conduct, or had even committed sins publicly, so people visiting Medina would come in with a very negative view of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa) would not let his followers punish these people, instead, he would respond by asking these travellers if they needed anything. This happened multiple times in his life.

Below, find a list of scenarios that can happen in our lives where we need to act courageously by either raising our voices against injustice, swallowing our anger, or making peace between others.

Which response is appropriate in each situation? Are there multiple appropriate ways to respond?

Discuss your answers with a partner or a group.

1. Your friend tells you that one of your Muslim classmates is saying unkind things about everyone in your family. What do you tell your friend? How do you act towards that classmate?

2. Your city recently passed a law which states that men and women wearing any sort of religious clothing, including ḥijab for women, cannot go to public buildings or gatherings without facing hefty fines. What is your responsibility? What do you do?

3. Someone graffitied a local Islamic school which is managed by Muslims of a different school of thought. What can you do?

4. A Muslim friend, who has a very tough home life due to his mother passing away when they were a baby, asks if they can come to your house to study. At your house, they break one of your favorite things, and eat an entire box of your favorite snack. When they leave, they don't really thank you for your hospitality.. What do you do?

5. Saminah and Tahirah, two Muslims at your mosque, post some nasty comments aimed at each other online. You know that adults from your community cannot see their posts, and their behavior reflects badly on them and your community. What should you do in this situation?

2.5 Imām al-Ḥusayn's (ʿa) Supportive Character

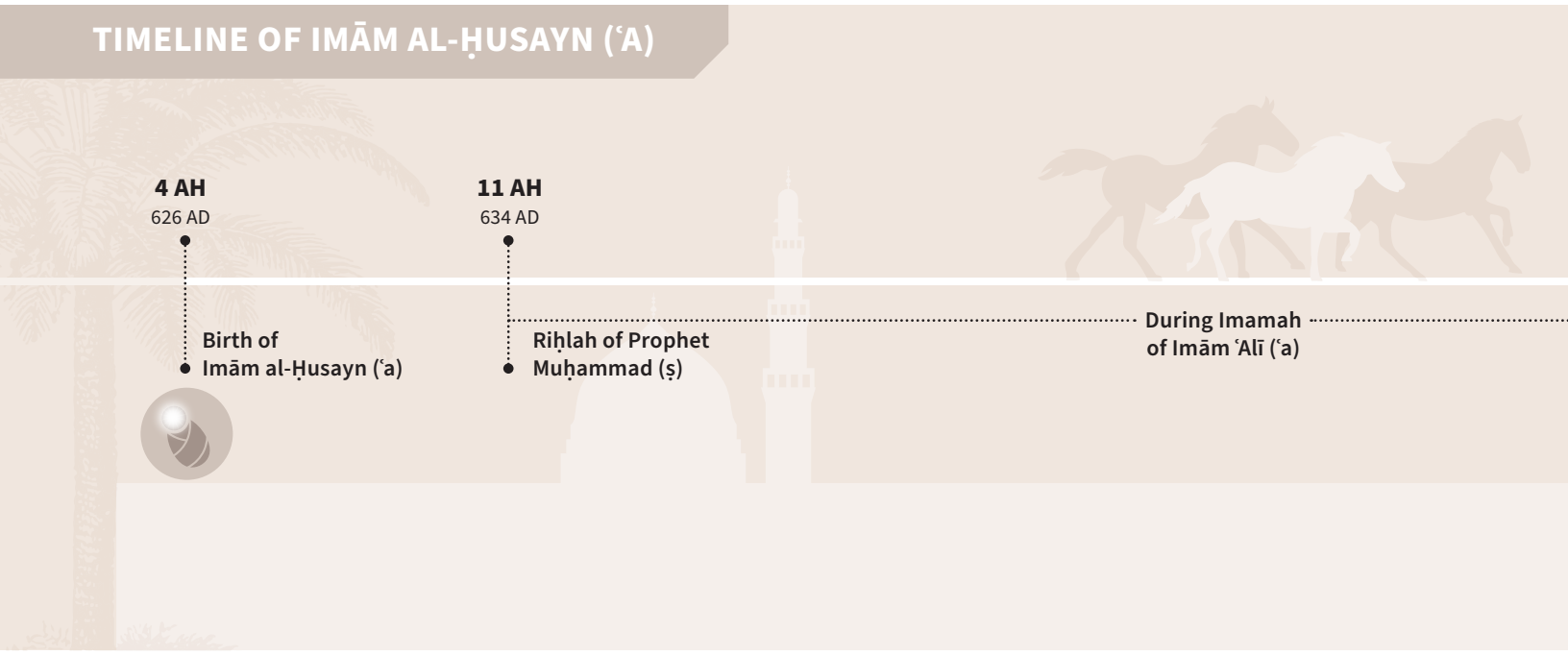
OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the circumstances of the birth of Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) and Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) love for him
- Outline the ways in which Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) demonstrated supported the Imāmah of his brother, Imām Al-Ḥasan (ʿa)
- Analyze the reasons for Imām Al-Ḥusayn's (ʿa) principled stance against Yazīd
- Explain why the ziyārah (visitation) of the grave of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) holds such a high status

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN (ʿA)

Name	Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib
Kunyah	Abū ʿAbdillāh
Title	Sayyid Ash-Shuhadāʾ
Parents	Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and Sayyidah Faṭimah (ʿa)
Date of Birth	3rd Shaʿbān, 4 AH
Birthplace	Medina
Duration of Imāmah	10 years
Date of Martyrdom	10th Muḥarram, 61 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Karbala
Cause of Martyrdom	Beheaded on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Shrine	Karbala, Irāq

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-ḤUSAYN (ʿA)



BIRTH TO RIḤLAH OF THE NOBLE PROPHET (Ṣ) | 3RD SHAʿBĀN, 4 AH-28TH ṢAFAR, 11 AH (6.5 YEARS)

This blessed birth of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) took place on the 3rd of Shaʿban in the 4th year after ḥijrah. The house of the Prophet (ṣ) was overcome with joy when Angel Jabrāʾīl descended to congratulate the Prophet (ṣ) and inform him that Allah (swt) had chosen a name for this baby: Al-Ḥusayn, goodness.

The Noble Prophet (ṣ) always gave Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) a lot of love and attention.

The Prophet (ṣ) wanted everyone to know his grandsons, because they would be the leaders of the Muslims after him. He would frequently be heard saying:

حُسَيْنٌ مِنِّي وَ أَنَا مِنْ حُسَيْنٍ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ أَحَبَّ حُسَيْنا

Ḥusayn is from me, and I am from Ḥusayn. May Allah love the one who loves Ḥusayn.[1]

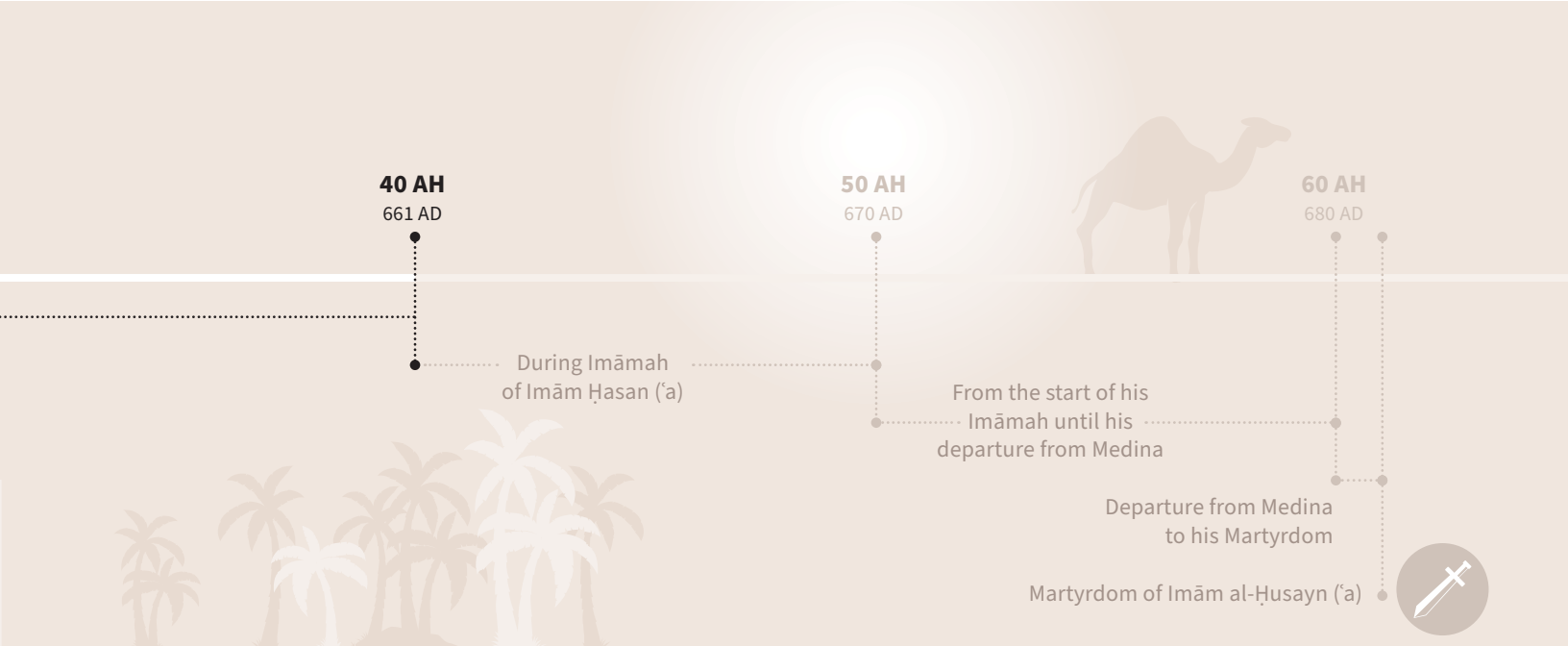
One day, he put Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) on his shoulders and announced, *"O people! I know that after me, you are going to have differences. This is Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa)! His lineage is the best of lineages; his grandfather is the Prophet and his grandmother is Khadījah (ʿa). What has been given to him has not been given to anybody!"*

He made it very clear to people who this boy was and how they should treat him. He was even heard saying:

"Anyone who wants to look at what a youth in paradise will look like, look at Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa)."[2]

RIḤLAH OF THE PROPHET (Ṣ) TO THE SHAHĀDAH IMĀMʿALĪ (ʿA) | 28TH ṢAFAR, 11 AH-21ST RAMAḌAN, 40 AH

In the year 11 AH, on the 28th day of Ṣafar, the Prophet's (ṣ) passed away. His death was extremely difficult for his family. Not only was he their beloved family member, he was also their beloved Prophet (ṣ). For a maʾsūm who has maʿrifah — or true understanding — of the best person on earth, this was very difficult. They could feel the nūr and mercy of the Prophet (ṣ) leave the earth.


40 AH
661 AD
50 AH
670 AD
60 AH
680 AD
During Imāmah of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa)
From the start of his Imāmah until his departure from Medina
Departure from Medina to his Martyrdom
Martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)

1 *Al-Tirmidhi*, V. 2, P. 306

2 *Biḥār Al-Anwār*, V. 37, P. 75

THINK ALOUD: How can you work on your maʿrifah to gain a better understanding of the Prophet (ṣ) and Imāms (ʿa), even though we cannot see them?

After he left this world, his grandsons were heartbroken. The oppressive rulers forbid Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa) and her family from crying for the Prophet (ṣ). During the day, Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa) would take them to a shelter on the outskirts of Medina, so they could mourn there.

At night, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) would take them to the Prophet's (ṣ) grave so they could cry there.

THINK ALOUD: Why would the rulers of the time prevent the Ahl Al-Bayt (ʿa) from crying for the Prophet (ṣ)?

The rulers of the time were afraid that if people heard the family of the Prophet (ṣ) crying, their hearts might soften towards the family. People might start to recognize who had the right to rulership. So, they came up with various strategies to prevent the people from understanding the status of the Ahl Al-Bayt (ʿa).

These young boys and their sisters also had to see the oppression their parents suffered at the hands of the rulers of the time.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) was alongside his brother when their mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), would go to each house in the city and remind the people how they pledged allegiance to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) would do anything in his power to help his mother and father in standing up to the oppressors of the time, and he would tell the people who their true leaders were.

Soon after the death of their grandfather Rasūlullāh (ṣ), their mother Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) was martyred.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) continued to stand up to the oppressors, both publicly and privately.

His public resistance to injustice can be seen when he would go to the oppressors' palace and say, "Come down from my father's pulpit!" He was not afraid to stand up for the truth and placed his trust in Allah (swt), even in a situation that could be dangerous for a child.

THINK ALOUD: If you lived in that time, what are some ways you might have supported Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)?

Throughout the reign of the 3 caliphs, Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) would make sure that he was able to spread information about the injustices people faced and would help guide people to the way of justice and truth. He saw his father's companions being banished from the city, and would go to visit them even when people warned him of the dangers of doing so, because he knew that they were on the right path.

When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) finally became khalīfah and the people came to give him bayʿah, ImāmʿAlī (ʿa) asked both Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and Ḥusayn to go up to the minbar and give speeches.[3]

Then, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) himself went up and addressed the people,

> "O people! These are the grandsons of the Prophet (ṣ)! They are his amānāt (trusts) that I give to you. O people, know that the Prophet (ṣ) has told you about their importance many times!"[4]

Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) continued resisting oppression even during his father's khilāfah. A lot of the oppressors became more vocal as they tried to prevent Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) from spreading justice throughout the Islamic world, and they started many civil wars. Both Imāms defended their father in the battles of Jamal, Siffīn, and Nahrawān. During these battles, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) would stand up and give speeches, reminding the enemy about who Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was and who they were fighting against.[5]

THINK ALOUD: How did these battles show the extreme injustices Muslims faced after the death of Prophet Muhammad (ṣ)?

3 *Kitāb At-Tawḥīd*, P. 307; *Amāli* P. 425; *Irshād Al-Qulūb*, V. 2, P. 375

4 *Kitāb At-Tawḥīd*, P. 308; *Irshād Al-Qulūb*, V. 2, P. 376

5 *Sharḥ Nahj Al-Balāghah*, V. 2, P. 186

SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀMʿALĪ (ʿA) TO SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA)

As we learned in the previous chapter on the life of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), the 21st night of Ramaḍān was very difficult for the sons of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). After burying their father, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) headed to the masjid. There, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) announced his position as the Imām and took bayʿah from the people.

When Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) decided to sign the peace treaty, many people actually tried to provoke him and persuade him to stand up. But Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) knew that his brother made the right decision and he told them, "My brother is my Imām."[6]

THINK ALOUD: What reasons led to Imām Ḥasan's decision to make a peace treaty? What factors might influence how we react to oppression?

He stood firmly in support of his brother, as a way of resisting the caliphate of those who were not entitled to have it. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) made it clear who the Imām was and whom everyone should turn to for decisions. He was also showing the people that he, himself, was following the orders of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa). He wanted to show that the Imāmate is from Allah (swt). The Imāms are nūrun wāhid — all their decisions are like one person's decisions, since they are in direct accordance with Allah's (swt) will.

According to the treaty, Muʿāwiyah was not allowed to appoint a successor, but he had no intention of abiding by the treaty. He ordered Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) to be poisoned, and after killing Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), Muʿāwiyah now had an open path to do whatever he wished — except for one obstacle: Imām Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa), who would not allow the religion of his grandfather to be tainted by corrupt, power hungry oppressors.

We can see that Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) did not just stand up to oppression in the desert of Karbala, but that his whole life was spent in the servitude of Allah (swt), which included resistance to injustice throughout his life.

THINK ALOUD: In what ways was Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) standing up for people of all times by resisting injustice?

6 *Rijāl Al-Kashī*, V. 1, P. 110

In his speeches before departing Mecca to go towards Karbala, he even said,

> "I have taken this stand not out of arrogance or pride, nor out of mischief or injustice. I have risen to seek reformation in the community of my grandfather. I would like to bid good and forbid evil, and follow the tradition of my grandfather and my father 'All bin Abi Talib."

The status of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) is so high that it is advised for us to do his ziyārah frequently. Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) says to a companion:

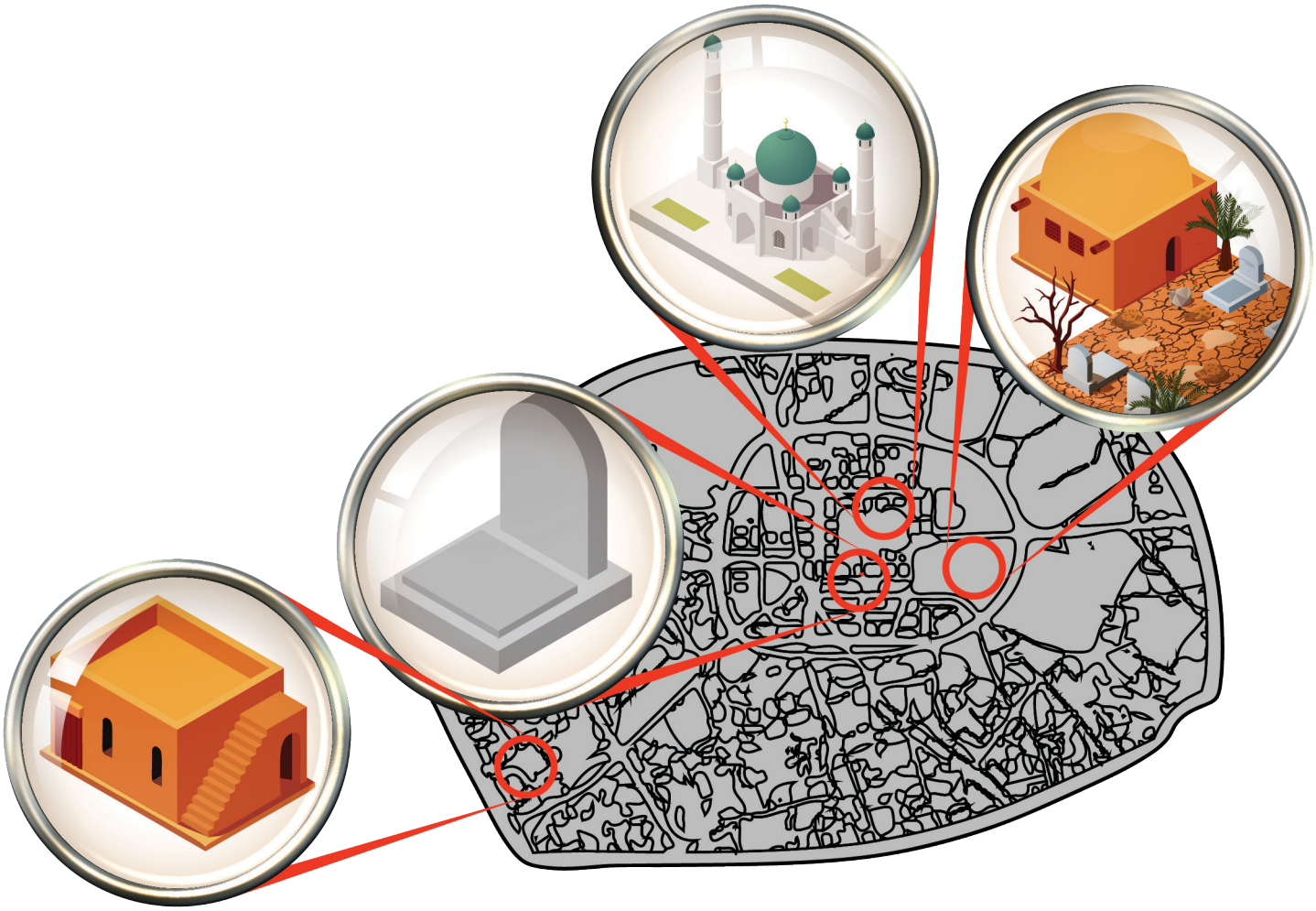
> *"Never set aside the Ziyārah of Imām Al-Ḥusayn, and tell your companions to do the same, for if you are able to do that, then Allah will increase your life and increase your rizq and you will live a life of happiness and die in a state of happiness and Allah will consider you one who reaches saʿādah (true happiness)."*

Activity 2.5a:

In this reimagined map of Medina, which is not to scale, we can imagine the routes that our first Imāms might have taken daily.

Identify:

a. Masjid An-Nabawī
b. The house of Imām ʿAli (ʿa)
c. The grave of the Noble Prophet (ṣ)
d. Jannatul Baqīʿ which may contain the grave of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)
e. Bayt Al-Aḥzān (outside the limits of Medina)



Worksheet 2.5b

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) repeatedly said that he was only uprising to reform the ummah (community) of his grandfather, Rasūlullah (ṣ).

"I have risen to seek reformation in the community of my grandfather."

1. Define reform. What does true reform mean?

2. How did Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) stance of not doing bayʿah (allegiance) with Yazīd lead to reform in the Muslim community?

3. What are the effects of this reform that we see today?

2.6 Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) Early Years

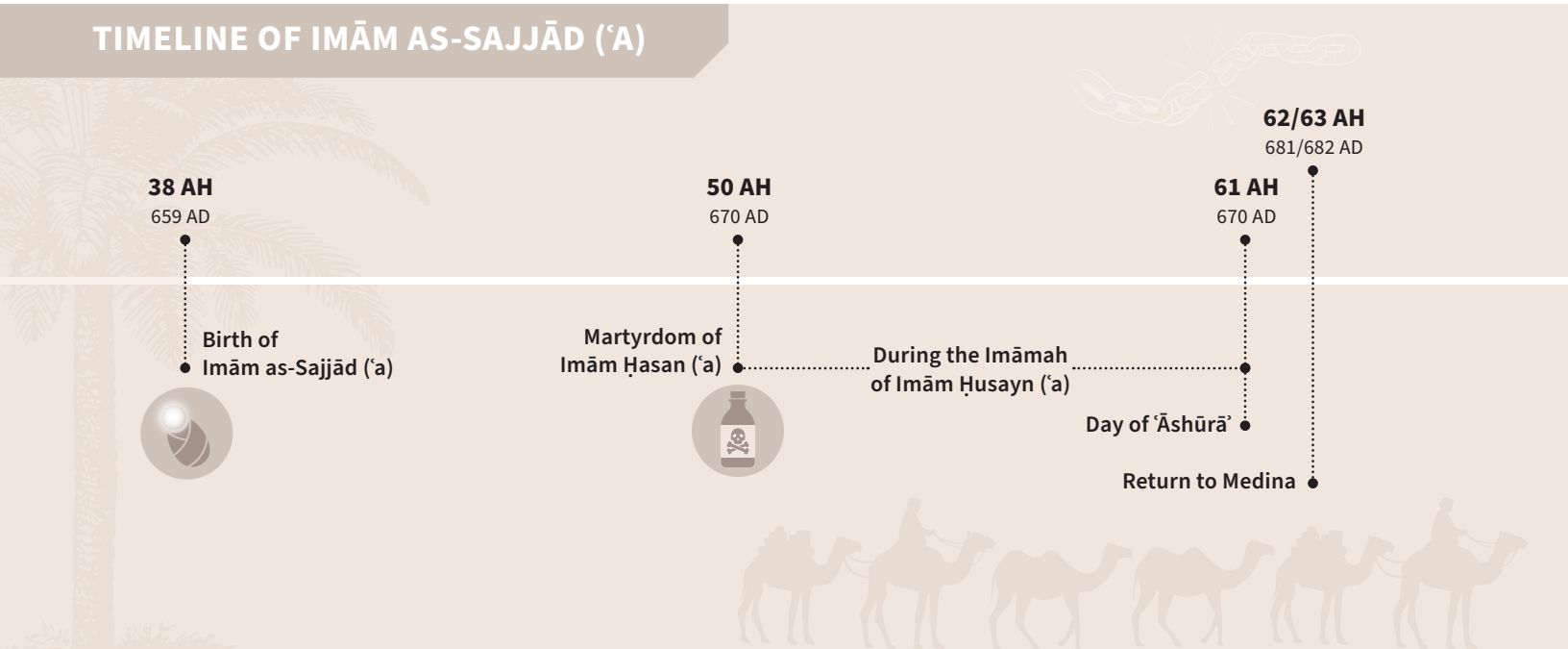
OBJECTIVES:

- Explain how Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) was named
- Compare the similarities between Prophet ʿIsā and Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) as babies
- Review Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) experiences in the lives of each of the Imāms prior to him
- Describe the beautiful worship of Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) in his wajib and mustaḥab actions. Connect this to our own lives

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD (ʿA)

Name	ʿAlī ibn Al-Ḥusayn
Kunyah	Abū Muḥammad
Title	As--Sajjād, Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn
Parents	Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and Ḥaḍrat Shaharbanū
Date of Birth	5th Shaʿbān, 38 AH
Birthplace	Kufa (or Medina according to some narrations)
Duration of Imāmah	34 years
Date of Martyrdom	25th Muḥarram, 95 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina
Cause of Martyrdom	Poisoned by Walīd ibn ʿAbdul Malik
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Grave	Jannatul Baqīʿ, Medina, Saudi Arabia

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD (ʿA)



BIRTH TO SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀM ʿALĪ (ʿA) | 5TH SHAʿBĀN, 38AH- 21ST RAMAḌĀN, 40AH (2 YEARS)

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was born on Thursday, the 5th of Shaʿbān, 38 years after Ḥijrah. His parents are Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and Ḥaḍrat Shaharbanū, who was the daughter of a Persian king. The Imām (ʿa) was born during the period of Imām ʿAlī's (a) khilāfah.

Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh Al-Anṣārī reported, *"I was sitting with the Messenger of Allah, when he placed Al-Ḥusayn on his lap and was playing with him. Then he (ṣ) said, 'O Jābir! A son will be born for him, and the son will be named ʿAlī. A caller will call out on the Day of Judgment, "Let Sayyid Al-ʿĀbidīn (the Chief of Worshippers) stand up." Then, his son will stand up."*[1]

When he was born, his grandfather, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), recited the adhān in his right ear and iqāmah in his left ear. Seven days after his birth, his father, Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) sacrificed a sheep, cut his hair, and gave silver equal to its weight as charity to the needy, which is an ʿaqīqah according to the sunnah of the Prophet (ṣ).

IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN (ʿA)

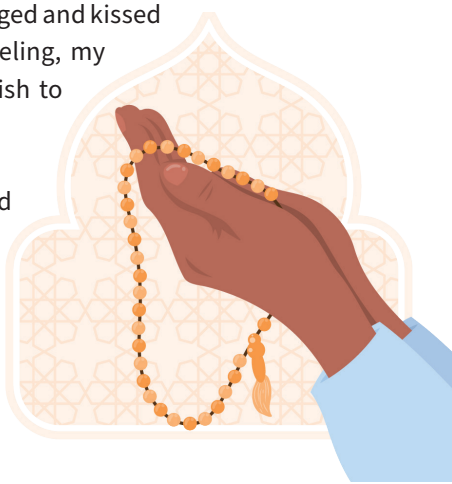
During the Imāmah of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was just a young child. Imām Al-Sajjād (ʿa) saw firsthand the difficulties his uncle, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), experienced.

He saw that the unjust rulers of the time would impose restrictions on his uncle and his father, and how badly the Muslims of the time treated his uncle.

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) spent time with his uncle as a child. He observed how his uncle worshiped Allah (swt), and how he would weep when he would think about death, when he would think about being placed in the grave, and when there would be talk about the resurrection. He noticed that when his uncle would stand for prayer, his body would shake out of fear and reverence of Allah (swt).

IMĀM SAJJĀD'S (ʿA) WISH

In his childhood, our 4th Imām, Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) once fell very ill. Imām Husayn (ʿa) came into the room that he was laying down in and hugged and kissed him, asking, "How are you feeling, my son? Is there anything you wish to have? I can bring it for you!"



Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) responded to his father, saying, "My wish is only one that Allah (swt) should place me amongst those who are ever pleased and satisfied with whatever He destined for them."

1 *Wasīlat Al-Māl fi ʿAd Manāqib* Al-Āl, P. 7

95 AH
713 AD

Martyrdom of Imām as-Sajjād (ʿa)

Hearing this beautiful duʿā, his father hugged him and said, "You have indeed spoken words of knowledge (maʿrifah). Your answer is similar to that of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa), when he was thrown into fire (by Namrūd), Angel Jibrāīl met him and asked him if he had any wishes, to which Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) replied, "Indeed I do, but not from you!"[2]

THINK ALOUD: How were the two wishes similar?

Even at such a young age, the Imām (ʿa) knew how to make beautiful duʿās!

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was about 12 years old when he witnessed the shahādah of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa). This was the peak of Muʿāwiyah's power, and times were tough for the Ahl al-Bayt in Madīnah. His uncle's body was shot with arrows when they tried to bury it near the grave of the Prophet (ṣ). Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) witnessed this, and he stood by Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and helped in whatever capacity he could.

DURING THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN (ʿA) | 28TH ṢAFAR, 50AH- 10TH MUḤARRAM, 61AH (11 YEARS)

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was approximately 23 years old when he accompanied his father to Karbala. Until the day of ʿĀshūrāʿ, or perhaps some days earlier, Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was perfectly healthy, preparing for battle alongside his brothers. He was ready to sacrifice his life and stand up to the unjust rulers of the time, to save Islam. However, Allah (swt) knew that Imāmah needed to be preserved.

It was a divine plan that Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) became extremely ill on the night of ʿĀshūrāʾ and could not participate in the battle the next day. This was the way that Allah (swt), out of His infinite wisdom, wished to preserve the divine Imāmah. Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was so sick he could not even get out of the cot that he lay on in his tent.

Soon, even the last companion had given his life for Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa). The only two adult males remaining in the camp of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) were the two Imāms (ʿa). When it came time for him to depart to the battlefield for the last battle, Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) went into the tent of Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) to pass on the position of Imāmah When Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) called out for help, Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) tried his best to go to his father. He shakingly stood up and dragging his sword like a cane, he came out of the tent. But according to some reports, his father commanded Umm Kulthūm, "Restrain him! Otherwise, there will be no one from the family of Muḥammad (ṣ) left on the earth!"

After the martyrdom of his father, the role of Imāmah transferred to Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) at the age of 22. After the day of ʿAshūrāʾ, Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) family was taken captive. Throughout the difficulties the women and children of the Ahl ul-Bayt faced after the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, Imām As-Sajjād (a) was the pillar of support for the family. In the journey to Kufah and Shām, the Imām (a) gave strong speeches in which he utterly humiliated the Banū Umayyah, waking up the people and informing them of the crime that had occurred in Karbala.

THE TITLE "AS-SAJJĀD"

Our fourth Imām (ʿa) earned two beautiful titles from Allah (swt) that he is known by.

Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) narrates, *"My father ʿAlī ibn Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) would perform sajdah whenever he remembered a favor of Allah (swt). He would do sajdah whenever he would recite an āyah (verse) from the book of Allah (swt) that contained sajdah in it. And whenever Allah (swt) would repel any evil from him that he was afraid of, or the plotting of any evil person, he would do sajdah. And whenever he would finish any obligatory prayer he would do sajdah. And whenever he would be successful in reconciling two people he would do sajdah. There was a mark of sajdah on all the places of his body that touched the ground during sajdah. Hence he was known As-Sajjād."*[3]

THINK ALOUD: Identify some aspects of your life in which you can incorporate the worship of Allah (swt) into your routine to emulate Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) worship. Remember to start with the wājibāt!

2 *ʿIlal Ash-sharāyiʿ*, P. 23-24

3 *ʿIlal Ash-sharāyiʿ* V. 1, P. 233

Activity 2.6a: Review Questions

1. In the beginning of the lesson, we saw that Rasūlullāh (ṣ) told his companion Jābir the name of the 4th Imām (ʿa). Recall who Jābir ibn ʿAbdullah al-Anṣāri was. Why is this ḥadīth significant?

2. How old was Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) when his grandfather Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was martyred? Would he have been old enough to see the injustices that his grandfather faced?

3. What are the two most famous titles of our Imām ʿAlī ibn Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) ? How are these related? What is the difference between the two?

Worksheet 2.6b: A Personal Du'ā

Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah

At the beginning of Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah, found here: **www.al-islam.org/sahifa-al-kamilah-al-sajjadiyya-imam-ali-zayn-al-abidin/**

A collection of duʿās quoted from Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa), and we see that the Imām begins with the praise of Allah (swt), followed by praise of His Messenger (ṣ) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

In the next duʿās, we can see that the Imām (ʿa) often uses this pattern to make duʿā, and it is one of the recommended acts to start supplications with Bismillāh and Ṣalawāt.

A translator of the Ṣaḥīfah says:

> "In the Ṣaḥīfah we see Islamic spirituality - or that dimension of the religion of Islam which deals with the practical and lived reality of the personal relationship between man and God - expressed in the most universal of languages, that of the concrete and intimate yearning of the soul for completion and perfection."

What do you think this means? Show evidence from some of the duas to back your understanding.

After reflecting on this statement, write a personal duʿā around one specific thing you would like to ask Allah (swt) for, perhaps using the words of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) as an inspiration.

2.7 Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) in Shām

OBJECTIVES

- Develop strategies to understand the dark period in the history of Shīʿahs that the Imām lived through
- Analyze the speech of the Imām (ʿa) during the ādhān in the court of Yazīd
- Understand the importance of the leadership style of the Imām (ʿa) being necessary for the people of his time

ʿĀSHŪRĀʾ TO THE RETURN TO MEDINA | 10TH MUḤARRAM, 61AH

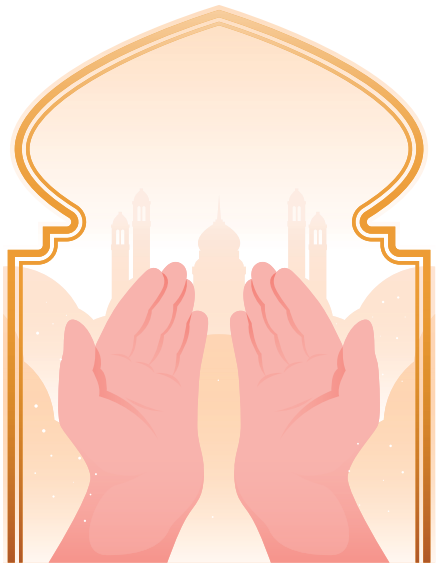
No Imām (ʿa) began his Imāmah in a more tragic atmosphere. On the first day of his Imāmah, he was seriously ill and a captive of the army of Yazīd in Karbala. His father and his family members had sacrificed all they had for Truth.

Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) found himself with a group of widows and orphans being forced to march from place to place. They were thrown into a prison, where the Imām spent the first portion of his Imāmah, cut off from the ummah (community). Understandably, the tragedy of Karbala had created chaos in the Shīʿah world. The Shīʿah were in a time of darkness and the community was in confusion.

Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) had three difficult tasks before him:

- To announce his Imāmah publicly
- To unite the community, and prevent Yazīd from dividing them further
- To expand the faith of the muʾminīn without attracting the attention of their enemies

Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa), under divine guidance, achieved all these aims in a beautiful way. His legacy is alive in the duʿās and aḥādīth we have from him today.



FROM KUFA TO SHĀM

From Kufa, the captives were taken to Shām (Damascus). Perhaps it was in this journey that the Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) recited a duʿā, which eventually became known as Duʿā #8 from Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah (His Duʿā in Seeking Refuge from Hateful Things).

Recitation of this duʿā, and other pearls of wisdom that came from the Imam's (ʿa) blessed tongue, would catch the attention of all those around him. His supplications discussed spiritual diseases such as arrogance, jealousy, and greed. He wanted to awaken the people and help them realize that their deception was rooted in these diseases of the soul.

When the caravan reached an area near Shām, the army made them stop. Yazīd wanted to decorate the city to show their joy in their victory over the grandson of Rasūlullāh (ṣ). When the city was fully decorated, the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) were paraded through the streets of Shām and people celebrated the death of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa).

Unfortunately, the Banī Umayyah had spread so much propaganda and false rumors that the people were convinced that the captives were blameworthy and deserving of being prisoners.

THINK ALOUD: List 3 ways that news spreads in our day and age, and then list the ways it can spread misinformation.

One elderly man approached Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) and said, "All praise is for Allah (swt) who destroyed you and granted the governor power over you."

The Imām (ʿa) knew that this man had been deceived by the news and the people around him, so he asked, "Respected elder, have you read the Qurʾān?"

The man answered, "Yes, of course!"

The Imām (ʿa) continued, "Have you read the verse that says, 'Say: I do not ask from you any reward for it except love of my close ones,' and the verse that says, 'And give the [Prophet's] relatives their [due] right,' and the verse that says, 'Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for Allah (swt) and the Messenger, and for the relatives [of the Prophet].'"

The elderly Syrian faintly replied, "Yes, I have read all of them."

The Imām (ʿa) then told him, "I swear by Allah (swt), we are the relatives and kinsfolk referred to in all these verses. Shaykh, have you read these words of Allah (swt), the exalted:

'Allah (swt) only desires to keep away impurity from you, O Household (of the Prophet) and purify you thoroughly?'[1]

Again, the man answered, "Yes."

"We are the Household (of the Prophet) whom Allah (swt) favored with the Verse of Purification."

By this point, the elderly man was shaking. *O how I wish that the earth had swallowed me up before I had said my words,* he thought to himself. He asked the Imām (ʿa), "By Allah (swt), are you really those people?"

"I swear by our grandfather, Rasūlullāh (ṣ), that we are, without any doubt," replied the Imām (ʿa).

Hearing the Imām's (ʿa) reply, the man fell to his knees and began kissing Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) hands. With tears in his eyes, he declared, "I dissociate myself before Allah (swt) from those who killed you!"

He asked the Imām for forgiveness, and the Imām (ʿa) immediately forgave the man.[2]

It was through his akhlāq and reminders to the people that the Imām (ʿa) managed to bring the people out of their **ghaflah** (heedlessness) and awaken them to help them realize who they were.

THINK ALOUD: Is implementing good adab (treatment of others) part of your responsibility to advise others? Are there times in which you would need to dissociate yourself from others instead of advising them?

Even though he was taken through the city in chains, Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) took every opportunity to remind the people of the status of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Whenever he was given a chance, he would speak bravely and eloquently. He demonstrated courageousness and standing up to the oppressors through dissociation with them. He continued to remind people of justice and encouraged them to worship Allah (swt) in the right way. This was his duty as the Imām, because he knew what was right and what his responsibility was.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aḥzāb, 33:33

2 *Al-Luhūf,* P. 177

SPEECH IN THE COURT OF YAZĪD

Perhaps one of the most powerful speeches given by Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was in the court of Yazīd. Yazīd had invited everyone to his palace, including important nobles, to celebrate his victory over the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Once the court was full of people, he ordered a speaker to ascend the pulpit and curse Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and praise Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd. As the man was spouting these lies, Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) interrupted and said, "Woe unto you! You have traded the pleasure of the creation for the wrath of the Creator, so take your place in the hellfire!"

The Imām (ʿa) then turned to Yazīd and asked for permission to sit on the pulpit and deliver a speech that would bring rewards for everyone present. Those in attendance were shocked at this ill prisoner who dared to interrupt the gathering. Of course, Yazīd refused, but the people insisted.

The people were confused and asked, "What can this sick man do to you?" They did not know who the Imām (ʿa) was. The people kept pressuring Yazīd, so he had no choice but to allow the Imām (ʿa) to take the pulpit.

The Imām (ʿa) began speaking and delivering one of the most eloquent speeches in all of history, one that moved the entire crowd to tears. The Imām (ʿa) began by introducing himself and his family, to remind the people that the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) were sent as divine guides to the people.

He said, "Whoever recognizes me knows me, and whoever does not recognize me, let me introduce myself and the family to which I belong..." and he continued in this manner, describing himself, his grandfathers Rasūlullāh (ṣ) and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and then finally mentioning the tragedy of Karbala until people were weeping uncontrollably.

Yazīd was sweating in his seat, thinking the people would revolt against him. After all, the Imām (ʿa) had taught the Syrians all about himself and his family, igniting a cultural revolution. So, he quickly ordered the muʾadhin to recite the adhān to distract people.

The muʾadhin quickly began reciting, "Allahū Akbar, Allahū Akbar!"

The Imām (ʿa) turned to him and said, "You have made great the Great One who cannot be measured or felt by senses; there is nothing greater than Allah (swt)."

The muʾadhin continued, "Ashhadu an-lā ilāha illallāh!"

The Imām (ʿa) then said, "My hair, skin, flesh, blood, brain, and bones bear witness that there is no god except Allah (swt)."

The muʾadhin went on, "Ashhadu anna Muḥammadar Rasūlullāh!"

At this point, the Imām (ʿa) turned to Yazīd and asked, "Yazīd, is Muḥammad your grandfather or mine? If you say that he is yours, then you are a liar, and if you say that he is mine, then why did you kill his family?"

Yazīd was speechless and dumbfounded. The Imām's (ʿa) grandfather was the Prophet (ṣ) of Allah (swt), whereas his grandfather was Abū Sufyān, the enemy of the Prophet (ṣ).

THINK ALOUD: Why do you think the Imām (ʿa) focused his speech on identifying who he was? What was the effect of this?

The Imām's (ʿa) speech had a massive effect on the Syrians. They left the gathering feeling they had been misled by the Banī Umayyah and guilty about their transgressions. They began spreading the word about the Umayyad propaganda, and people's attitudes toward Yazīd quickly began changing and becoming more negative.

THE AHL AL-BAYT (ʿA) ARE FREED

Soon, the Syrians had become extremely restless and resentful towards Yazīd, so he knew he had to amend the situation. Therefore, he summoned Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) and apologized to him so that the people would think that Yazīd was not at fault. He then shifted the blame for Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) death to Ibn Ziyād and said, "May Allah (swt) curse Ibn Ziyād! I swear by Allah (swt) that if I had been with Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa), he never would have asked me for a favor without me granting it to him! I would have protected him from death with all my power even if I had to sacrifice my own children!" He then told the Imām (ʿa) that he could ask for anything he wanted. The Imām (ʿa) knew that his apology was insincere and he was just trying to save face, so he turned away and did not answer him.

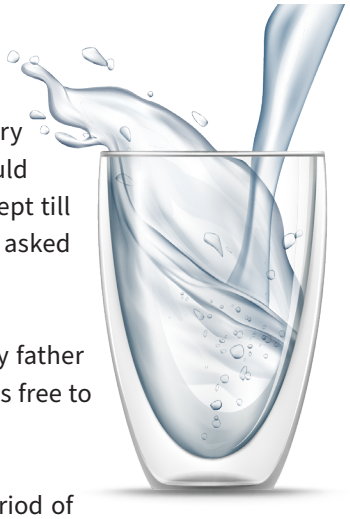
Again, Yazīd called Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) and asked him to ask what he wanted. So, the Imām (ʿa) said, "I want to see my father's head, and I want you to return to us whatever you plundered. If you want to kill me, then send someone to guide my family to Medina."

Yazīd bowed his head and thought about the Imām's (ʿa) requests. Then, he raised his head and replied, "As for the face of your father, you will never see it. As for what was taken from you, it will be brought back to you. As for the women, no one will return with them except you. As for you, I will not kill you."

Yazīd ordered Nuʿman bin Bashīr to escort Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) and the women back to Medina. According to some reports, the women first asked Nuʿman bin Bashīr to take them to Karbala so they could perform the ziyārah of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and the martyrs of Karbala. They remained in Karbala to mourn for three days before finally heading back to their hometown, Medina.

THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE IMĀM (ʿA)

Sorrow and grief can succeed in bringing people together. At the time of a tragedy, everyone unites to share the sorrow and shoulder the resulting responsibilities. Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) used this method to unite the community when he was freed from prison.



It is said that he continued to weep till his eyes became very weak. And whenever he would take a cup to drink water, he wept till the tears filled the cup. When asked about this, he answered:

"Why should I not cry, when my father was denied the water which was free to the beasts and animals?

The Imām (ʿa) lived during a period of brutal caliphs, each one trying to outdo the previous one in their brutality to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) always used his tears and his supplications to Allah (swt) to teach his followers, even when the caliphs limited him from preaching.

The Imam (a) was martyred at the age of 57, on the 25th of Muharram in the year 95 AH. He was poisoned by the caliph Walīd bin ʿAbdil Malik, who in turn was instigated to commit this crime by his brother Hishām. When the Imam (a) passed away the sounds of crying and wailing were heard across the city of Medina. Men and women, young and old, the free and the slaves, everyone was in a state of mourning. The pious and the sinners alike attended his funeral. He was laid to rest in Baqīʿ Cemetery, next to his uncle Imam Al-Ḥasan (ʿa).

Activity 2.7a: Comic Strip

Use the space below to illustrate one of the following events mentioned in this lesson:

I. Conversation with the elderly man in Damascus

II. The speech of the Imam in the courtyard of Yazid

III. Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) conversation with Yazid when the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) are freed

Worksheet 2.7b

In the lesson we briefly referenced the speech Imām Zayn Ul-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) made in the court of Yazīd. Here is an extended version of this speech:

"O people! We have been bestowed six qualities and seven merits by Allah (swt):

Knowledge, forbearance, munificence, eloquence, valor and friendship in the hearts of the believers are present in us.

While our merits are that the Prophet in Authority is from amongst us; the Truthful (Imām ʿAlī) is from amongst us; the Flyer (Jaʿfar Aṭ-Ṭayyār) is from amongst us; the Lion of Allah (swt), and that of His Prophet, is from amongst us; while also the two youth (Ḥasan and Ḥusayn) of this nation are from amongst us. Those who know me, know me, while those who do not know me, I reveal my pedigree and ancestry for them until they recognize me.

O people! I am the son of Mecca and of Mina. I am the son of Zamzam and Ṣafā.

I am the son of the one who was taken up to Sidrat al-Muntahā. I am the son of the one "who was bestowed revelation by the Almighty, what He did reveal."[3] I am the son of Muhammad, the Chosen One!

I am the son of the person who fought against enemies with two swords. He emigrated twice, pledged allegiance twice (to the prophet), and prayed in the two Qiblas. I am the son of ʿAlī, the Approved One.

I am the son of Fātimah Az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa).

I am the son of Ḥusayn, the one killed at Karbala. [It is said that the Imām became emotional at this time] I am the son of the one who was smeared in blood and sand. I am the son of the one who was lamented upon by the Spirit in the darkness of the night. I am the son of the one who was mourned by the birds."

3 *Noble Qurʿān,* An-Najm, 53:1-25

1. Let's take apart some of the lessons in this speech. What could the aim of the Imām (ʿa) be in praising the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) so much?

2. Recall we have talked about self-confidence and arrogance. How can we explain that this speech is not arrogant?

3. Why did Yazid consider it necessary to stop the speech here, when the Imam had just been describing his family?

4. Do you think there were some people who were not affected by this speech? Why?

2.8 Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa): Reforming Hearts

OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the atmosphere in Medina when Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) returned after the shahādah of his father, Imām Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)
- Analyze the sociopolitical purposes behind Imām As-Sajjād's duʿās
- Outline ways in which the Imām remained steadfast and patient despite the multiple unjust ruler of his time
- Describe the legacy of Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa)

RETURN TO MEDINA TO SHAHĀDAH (2ND RABĪʿ UL-AWWAL, 62 AH-25TH MUḤARRAM, 95 AH)

When Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) and the caravan approached Medina, he sent up a tent for the women. Then, he turned to a man named Bashīr bin Hadhlam, whose father was a famous poet. He asked Bashīr to enter Medina and announce the death of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) ahead of the caravan. Bashīr went near Masjid an-Nabī in Medina, where he loudly cried out:

O people of Medina! May you never stay therein!

Al-Ḥusayn was killed, so let the tears now rain,

His body is in Karbala, all blood-stained!

While his head is on a spear, for all displayed

Hearing this, the people began crying loudly and gathered around Bashīr, asking him for more information. He announced, "Here is ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn accompanied by his aunts and sisters; they have all returned to you. I am his messenger to you to inform you of his place."[1]

The people went out to welcome the Imām (ʿa) and his caravan, all the while crying and wailing, offering their condolences.

IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD'S STRUGGLES IN MEDINA

While our Imāms were alive, there were always those who sought to keep power for themselves and away from the Imāms (ʿa), because they knew that they would not get special privileges if the Imāms lead the people with justice. Although people commonly think that Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) problems ended when he returned to Medina, the city of his grandfather, the era of oppression continued.

There were many in the city who abandoned the Imām (ʿa) out of fear of being associated with him, and out of a desire to be closer to the governing leadership. Even some of the people who used to love the Imām (ʿa) before he went to Karbala now wanted to hide their love from him. During this time, the Imām (ʿa) once said, "In Mecca and Medina, there are not even 20 people who love us, the Ahl ul-Bayt."[2]

1 *Al-Luhūf*, P. 115; *Maqtal Al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)*, P. 374; *Biḥār Al-Anwār,* V. 45, P. 147

2 *Sharḥ Nahj Al-Balāghah*, V. 4, P. 104; *Biḥār Al-Anwār*, V. 46, P. 143

According to Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa), for some years after returning to Medina, his father used to live in a black tent in the desert outside of the city. He did this because he did not want to be in contact with the people who had been disloyal to him. Also, from the desert, the Imām would secretly go to perform the ziyārah of his father and grandfather. Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was not even allowed in the Prophet's (ṣ) masjid and would sit outside by the shoes.

IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD'S (ʿA) DUʿĀS

One of the primary methods that Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) used to bring people to the path of true Islam was to spread pure Islamic teachings in the form of duʿā (supplication) as well as in advice.

For example, in a manner that would not be seen as political, he would talk about the concept of Imāmah. He introduced Imāmah as a fundamental Islamic belief that all Muslims will be questioned about in their graves.

This made people think: who really are the Imāms (ʿa) in our time? Can the Banū Umayyah be the Imams?! Similarly his famous compilation of duʿās named Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādiyyah is full of Islamic teachings with regards to beliefs, culture, society, politics, as well as practical rulings - all passed on through supplications. This book is one of the greatest treasures we have today.

There are duʿās for all different topics and issues such as the rights of parents to children to neighbors. There are duʿās for when you are in a difficult situation, for worries, sorrows, or sickness. These duʿās can help us in every situation in our lives, and allow them to shape our hearts as well. It was through these duʿās that Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) would preach to and teach the people. His duʿās were full of important messages about akhlāq, courage, knowledge, tawḥīd, and much more.

THINK ALOUD: How can duʿā's change and refine the state of people's hearts?

The governor could not stop him because he was reciting duʿā, but through these duʿās, he was able to spread the teachings of Islam and slowly shape the hearts of the people. This is how he laid the foundations that would allow people to start understanding Islam and become students of the Imāms after him, like Imām Bāqir (ʿa) and Imām Sādiq (ʿa).

SPREADING AWARENESS OF ʿĀSHŪRĀ

The Imām (ʿa) would also do everything in his power to educate the people about the events of Karbalāʿ. He knew that the key to keeping Islam alive was to remind others of the sacrifice of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and the oppression that he and his family underwent. For example, when he would pass through the meat market and saw a butcher ready to slaughter an animal, he would ask, "What are you doing?"

The butcher would reply, "I am about to slaughter this animal."

The Imām (ʿa) would tell him, "Make sure to give him some water! My father was slaughtered without any water!"

Hearing this, people would become intrigued and want to know more.

THINK ALOUD: Why is reminding people about Karbala the key to keeping Islam alive?

The khalīfah had made it ḥarām to mourn and commemorate the sacrifice of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), so the Imām (ʿa) would hold secret majālis during Ḥajj, underground and in abandoned locations. After seven years, political disputes shifted the khalīfah's focus from him.

After Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) returned to Medina and word spread about the events of Karbala, many people were outraged at Yazīd's blatant oppression. Rebellions began springing up all over the Muslim world, as people attempted to oust Yazīd.

REBELLION IN MEDINA

When the news of Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) shahādah reached the people of Medina, they were outraged. As a result, the governor decided to send some nobles to Shām to meet with Yazīd. They were hoping that Yazīd would bribe them to calm them down. However, when they saw Yazīd up close — his drinking, gambling, and other bad habits — they returned to Medina even more upset. They began telling everyone about Yazīd's un-Islamic behavior and that he was unfit to be the khalīfah of the Muslims. Soon after, a rebellion broke out, and the Umayyads — the followers of Yazīd — were kicked out of Medina.

When Yazīd heard about this, he sent an army to Medina to squash the rebellion, almost 3 years after the tragedy of Karbala. His army surrounded the city, giving the people no choice except to surrender. After this, Yazīd's army entered the city and wreaked havoc, slaughtering and harming thousands of innocent and pious people. This horrible incident has come to be known as the 'Tragedy of Ḥarrah.'

During this tragedy. Yazīd had given clear instructions to his commander not to harm Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) or his family. Thus, the Imām's (ʿa) home actually became a safe haven, and many people were given shelter there. According to narrations, he housed more than 400 people during this time, many of whom had previously mistreated his family.

THINK ALOUD: Which good traits of akhlāq is the Imām (ʿa) demonstrating by giving shelter to those who hurt his family before? Is this action of the Imām a form of charity?

THE TAWWĀBĪN

Another notable rebellion that occurred as a result of Karbala was that of the Tawwābīn. The Tawwābīn were the same individuals who gave their bayʿah to Muslim ibn ʿAqīl and then turned their backs on him. Immediately after the tragedy of Karbala, they became regretful of their decision and wanted to atone for their mistake, hence their title, "The Tawwābīn," which means "those who repent." The Tawwābīn were led by a man named Sulaymān bin Ṣurad Al-Khuzāʿī and rose up in the year 65 AH, seeking revenge for Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), but they were quickly suppressed and killed.

MUKHTĀR ATH-THAQAFĪ

Perhaps the most famous uprising was that of Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayd ath-Thaqafī. Mukhtār was imprisoned before the battle of Karbala. When he was released from prison, he began a mission to seek revenge for Karbala. Although it is unclear whether Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) supported Mukhtār's movement, it is clear that he did not oppose it. He is recorded to have said, "May Allah reward Mukhtār with goodness," when Mukhtar killed ʿUbaydullāh ibn Ziyād and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd.

Mukhtār's uprising began in 66 AH, and his army managed to kill many of the enemies, such as Ḥarmalah, Shimr and ʿUmar bin Saʿd. They also overthrew and killed Ibn Ziyād, the governor of Kufa, and Mukhtār took over. He was governor for a little over a year, after which he was overthrown and killed.

THE STATE OF THE KHILĀFAH

Yazīd was only khalīfah for about three years. He died in the year 64 AH, after which his son, Muʿāwiyah ibn Yazīd was appointed to the position. His son was a pious man. He saw the oppressions that his father caused to the family of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and after 40 days, he abdicated the khilāfah and disapproved of his father and grandfather's opposition of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) and his children.

Now, the Umayyads were unsure of who should be khalīfah. Eventually, the khilāfah fell into the hands of Marwān bin Ḥakam. Marwān had previously been the governor of Medina, and he was the one who tried to force Walīd to get Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) bayʿah. Marwān was khalīfah for 9 months, until he was assassinated in 65 AH. Then, his son, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, became the khalīfah.

THE KHILĀFAH OF ʿABD AL-MALIK IBN MARWĀN

One of the darkest periods of Islamic history was during the khilāfah of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, which coincided with 21 years of Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) Imāmah. Prior to becoming caliph, ʿAbd Al-Malik was previously known as a pious person in Medina because he would spend a lot of time worshiping.

According to several narrations, he was reciting Qurʿān when he received the news of his father's death. Upon hearing this, he promptly closed the Qurʿān and said to the noble book, "A separation has now occurred between me and you, and I have nothing more to do with you!"[3]

THINK ALOUD: How can a change in circumstances change the relationship people have with Allah (swt)?

His actions demonstrate how he truly did separate himself from the Qurʿān. He was a vicious oppressor whose heart had become hardened due to his horrible actions. He, himself, admitted, "I have changed to the point that if I do good actions, I do not become happy, and if I commit evil actions, I do not become upset."[4]

THE KHILĀFAH OF WALĪD IBN ʿABD AL-MALIK

After the death of ʿAbd Al-Malik, his son Walīd became the khalīfah. He felt that as long as Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) was alive, the khilāfah was not safe, as people loved the Imām (ʿa) too much. Therefore, he decided to assassinate the Imām (ʿa) by ordering the governor of Medina to poison him.

After drinking the poison, the Imām (ʿa) suffered severe pain and was bedridden for a few days. During this time, he kept praying to Allah (swt), and whenever people came to him, he would praise Allah (swt) and thank Him for granting him martyrdom.

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) finally left this world on the 25th of Muḥarram in the year 95 AH. Prior to his martyrdom, he made it clear to the people that his son Imām Muḥammad Al-Bāqir (ʿa) would be the Imām after him.

THE LEGACY OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD (ʿA)

Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) left behind the beautiful duʿās and lessons for us in Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādiyah, Risālat Ul-Ḥuqūq, and Munājāt Khamsa ʿAsharah.

After the death of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), the circumstances remained very difficult for Imām Sajjād (ʿa) . We can use the lessons of his steadfastness and patience to think about our responsibilities in our lives.

Yet, as we know, he made the best decision in every situation because the Imāms (ʿa) are nūrun wāḥid; they are all from the same light, and they are each infallible. In our lives, we must always be tactful about the decisions that we make to ensure they align with the teachings of our Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

3 *Tārīkh Baghdād*, V. 10, P. 389

4 *Al-Kāmil fi At-Tārīkh*, V. 4, P. 521

Activity 2.6a: A Timeline of Imāmah

In the timeline below, add in the events (during the lifetime of Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa)) that happened in the highlighted year.

Highlighted years:

38 AH	50 AH	61 AH	63 AH

64 AH	65 AH	86 AH	95 AH

Activity 2.6b: Analyze a Du'ā from Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah

Sayyid Husayn M. Ja'fari, a translator of Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah, answers the question:

Why does Imām As-Sajjād (ʿa) pray for forgiveness of sins when he is inerrant?

"The original Arabic words **توبة** *&* **استغفار** *are translated as `repentance' and `forgiveness', but they convey meanings far broader than the English terms, both of which are connected with a sentimental and moralistic sense of guilt."*

"When the Prophet (ṣ) or Imām Zayn Al-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) ask God to forgive their sins, they are perfectly sincere in this request, but this does not necessarily imply that their sins lie at the same level as our own. As Islamic texts frequently remind us, qiyas bi l-nafs, "judging others by one's own self", is always misleading, especially if the others happen to have been the recipients of God's special favours."

With the lens above, examine Prayer 1 from the Whispered Prayers section towards the end of Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah. Read through the entire dua and then answer the following:

1. Why do you think Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) requests forgiveness in so many of his duʿās?

2. What can we learn from one of these prayers?

3. Then, annotate the duʿā based on your reflections when you read each line or section. Do not share your reflections with others. For example, you may reflect on some of the sins in your life that you are reminded of.

4. When you reach the end, which details Allah's (swt) forgiving attributes, reflect on how each attribute is connected with forgiveness and repentance. Write your reflections here.

2.9 Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Early Years

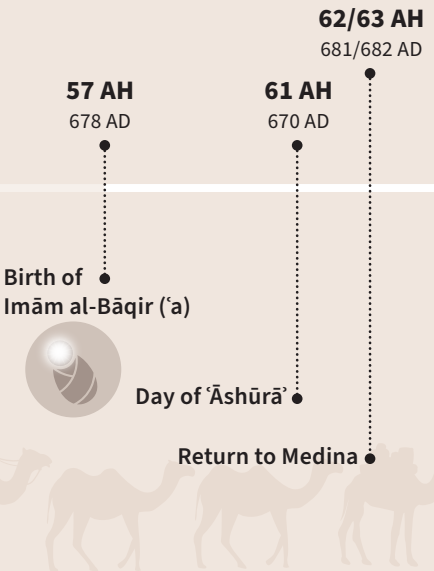
OBJECTIVES:

- Explain the demographics of Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) life
- Describe the experiences Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) had in Karbala and Shām during his early life
- Develop strategies to understand useful knowledge in Islam
- Explain how Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) established the foundations for the success of the Muslims through spreading true knowledge

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR (ʿA)

Name	Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Al-Ḥusayn
Kunyah	Abū Jaʿfar
Title	Al-Bāqir
Parents	Umm ʿAbdullāh, Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa)
Date of Birth	1st Rajab 57 AH
Birthplace	Medina
Duration of Imāmah	18 years
Date of Martyrdom	7th Dhul Ḥijjah 114 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina
Cause of Martyrdom	Martyred by poison
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Shrine	Jannat ul-Baqīʿ(Medina)

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR (ʿA)



The Imāms' (ʿa) shared goal is to guide us toward our purpose, and each Imām (ʿa) laid the foundation for future Imāms (ʿa) and others to achieve this goal.

BIRTH TO ĀSHŪRA WITH IMĀM ḤUSAYN (ʿA)

Our fifth Imām, Imām Muḥammad Al-Bāqir (ʿa), was born on the first day of the blessed month of Rajab. He was born in Medina to the fourth Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) and Umm ʿAbdullāh, who was the daughter of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa).

He is known as a beacon of light and Islamic knowledge. He played a tremendous part in planting the seed for the knowledge of Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq's (ʿa) school to flourish. He was born in a very difficult time, and the oppression of the Umayyad caliphate was very strong throughout the majority of his life.

When Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) was martyred on the 10th of Muḥarram in Karbala, Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) was only three and a half years old. As a young child, he witnessed his father Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn's (ʿa) illness, his aunt Zaynab running from the burning tents, and all the oppression that ensued.

He, too, had to run from the horses that were trampling the children and was chained along with Ruqayyah and Sukayna bint Al-Ḥusayn. Imām Muḥammad Al-Bāqir (ʿa), along with the other children, were all taken captive to Kufa and Shām.

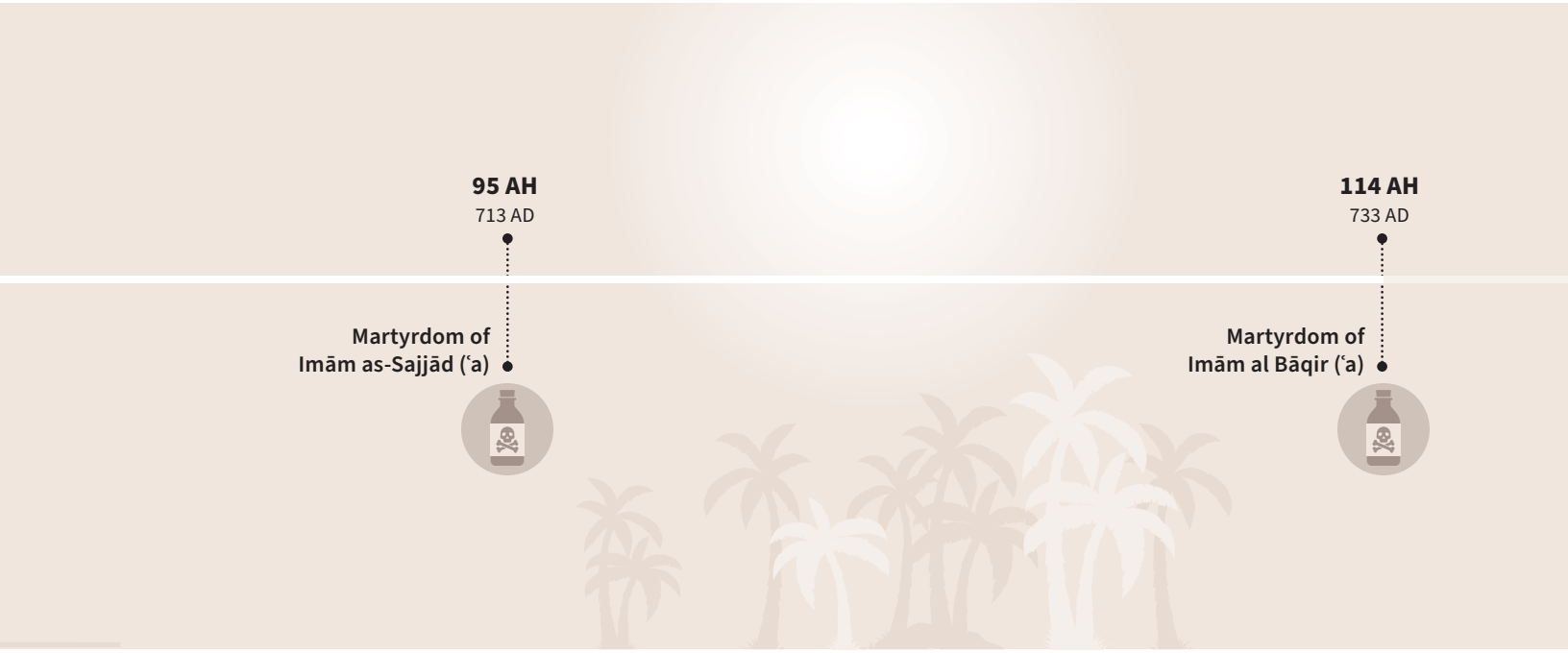
ʿĀSHŪRAʾ UNTIL RETURN TO MEDINA

After ʿĀshūraʾ, close to 50 children were taken prisoner, out of which only 12 survived. Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa), at the age of two and some months, was with his father in the court of Yazid in Shām. Yazīd threatened to enslave and kill the women and children of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

Imām As-Sajjād said, "O Yazīd! When Pharaoh was in power and consulted his advisors about Mūsā and Hārūn, they told him to let them live, whereas your advisors have told you to kill the children of the Prophet [and therefore you and your advisors are worse than Pharoah and his advisors!]!"[1]

THINK ALOUD: How does the Imām's (ʿa) challenging the oppressor, in those circumstances, show that he was special?

1 *Ithbāt Al-Waṣiyyah*, P. 171



MEDINA TO SHAHĀDAH OF HIS FATHER, IMĀM ZAYN UL-ʿĀBIDĪN

Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) was Imām for almost 34 years! As we discussed in some of the previous lessons, the environment at this time was such that Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) had to carry out many of his activities in secret. Some Muslims went as far as calling the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) kāfir based on the propaganda spread by the rulers.

However, Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) recruited the children of Medina, even the ones who had enmity towards the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and spent time with them. Some of these children that Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn mentored and taught grew up to later become Imām Baqir's (ʿa) students. In this way, the 4th and 5th Imāms (ʿa) paved the way for the university of the 6th Imām (ʿa) to be successful.

In Medina, there was a man living in Medina whose name was Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh Al-Anṣārī. This man lived a long life — until the age of 90! He was a companion of the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), and Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa).

During his Prophethood, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) had said to Jābir,*"O Jābir! One day, you will meet an individual who is from my family, whose name is my name, whose attributes are like mine, and who will open the doors of knowledge and wisdom for the people. Make sure to convey my salām to him."*[2]

This was way before Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) was even born! Finally, years later, during the Imāmah of the fourth Imām (ʿa), Jābir laid eyes on the young child who perfectly fit the description the Prophet (ṣ) had described.

He asked the young Imām (ʿa) his name, and Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) responded, *"Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn (ʿa)."* Jābir began to kiss his forehead and said

> "Your grandfather had said to me, 'O Jābir, send my salām to Muḥammad Al-Bāqir (ʿa) and know that he is Al-Bāqir because he will split knowledge open thoroughly."[3]

This is where our beloved fifth Imām (ʿa) gets his name "Bāqir" and the reason he was known as 'Bāqir Al-ʿUlūm.'

Sometimes, Islamic knowledge can be complicated, difficult for people to understand, or inaccessible. We say that Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) split open knowledge because he began to spread it to the people in a way that was easy and accessible for everyone.

THINK ALOUD: If Islam is meant for all mankind after the Prophet (ṣ) completed his message, why can Islamic knowledge be difficult or inaccessible?

Imām Al-Bāqir was able to teach people about Islam openly because the enemies of Islam were at war with each other. He educated many distinguished scholars of that time, and the companions of the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) who were still alive. In fact, many of the books of Ahl As-Sunnah contain the words of the Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa).

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

If we come back to the question of what kind of knowledge the Imāms (ʿa) were referring to, we would realise that they placed emphasis on any knowledge that could be used to:

1) Remind ourselves of Allah (swt)

For instance, if a student in his or her science class learns about the vastness of the solar system, the different types of stars, the perfect positioning of the planets and so on, and if such knowledge leads their mind and heart to think of Allah (swt) as the designer of this marvelous creation

2 *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib (ʿa)*, V. 3, P. 196; *Biḥār Al-Anwār*, V. 46, P. 295; *Rijāl Al-Kāshī*, P. 41

3 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 1, P. 469

and the One who gave it all of its beauty, wonder, and power, then such knowledge is the true knowledge.

On the other hand you may have a student who simply learns facts from the same science class just for the sake of passing their exams. They may quickly forget these facts. No one would benefit from such knowledge.

2) Benefit others

A doctor who has studied ten years of medicine simply to earn respect from his peers, earn e nough money and live a comfortable life is considered to have reached his potential in the eyes of Allah (swt).

Consider another doctor who gives special attention to the ill who cannot afford the usually expensive treatment, and who went to medical school so he could help such people for Allah's (swt) sake. Wouldn't such a person be held very dear in the eyes of Allah (swt)?

In this regard Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) says :

> "The knowledgeable man who is beneficial to others as a result of his knowledge is better than seventy thousand worshippers"[4]

3) Improve oneself by putting it to practice

Such knowledge would mainly include the seeking of Islamic knowledge. If after learning how to respect parents a student ignores what they learned and still continues to disrespect them, then his or her knowledge according to our Imāms (ʿa) is useless because it has not been put to practice.

Similarly, studying the stories of our past Prophets and knowing all the details is not enough since we need to derive lessons and apply them in our lives. Only then will our knowledge be useful.

Although the fifth Imām's (ʿa) period of Imāmah was a time wherein the political circumstances had improved for the followers of the Ahlul-Bayt (a)5, the situation was still not one where the Imām (a) could openly resist the oppressive government and establish a just Islamic society.

For this reason the Imām (ʿa) worked on laying the groundwork for this important goal by fixing the mindset of the Muslims. The Imām (ʿa) knew that an unjust and oppressive Muslim society can only exist if the people – due to their ignorance of true Islamic teachings – allow it to exist.

During the 19 years of his Imāmah, Imām Al-Baqir (a) spread teachings that were different from the deviant and corrupted version of Islamic teachings spread by the supporters of the Banū Umayyah. Their teachings allowed for injustice to remain in society. The Imām (ʿa) confronted them by introducing Muslims to the pure Islamic sciences. Large numbers of scholars, including many of the prominent scholars of the Sunni community6 studied sciences such as aḥādith (narrations of the Prophet (ṣ)), tafsīr (understanding of the Qur'an), aḥkām (jurisprudence), history, and literature from Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa).

THINK ALOUD: How can introducing people to Islamic sciences bring them closer to Allah (swt) and away from deviant teachings?

The Imām (ʿa) taught sciences such as fiqh and akhlāq, which helped people realize that Islām has vast treasures of knowledge through which we can get to know Allah (swt) and become human beings in the true sense of those words.

To summarise, any knowledge we gain and can put into practice - whether it is in our science class, jurisprudence, ethics, or history - that helps us to remember Allah (swt) and to benefit others, is the knowledge that Islam stresses upon.

4 *Mizanul Hikam*, No. 4471

5 Due to two reasons: the success of Imām As-Sajjād's (ʿa) efforts as well as changes on the part of the Banū Umayyah.

6 Individuals such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Qutādah bin Diʿāmah, and Ṭāwūs Al-Yamānī

Activity 2.9a: Review Questions

1. Why is Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) known as Bāqir al-ʿUlūm? What does ʿulūm mean?

2. How can seeking knowledge of history be applied to our daily lives? For example, list some practical morals from this lesson you can apply in your daily life.

3. Our Imāms (ʿa) stressed that the intention behind and practice after gaining knowledge are what makes the difference between useful and non-useful knowledge. Consider your intention in attending this class. How can you refine it to make this knowledge more beneficial?

Activity 2.9b: Examining their Intentions

In the table below, change the intention that may not be as beneficial to a more beneficial outlook on gaining knowledge for the people involved.

SCENARIO	TREATING IT AS FACTS	REFRAME IT TO BE BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE
Samirah needs a CPR class credit to become a babysitter.	She reluctantly takes the class, thinking she'll never need to use the information.	
In his civil rights class, Tanvir is learning about civil rights and the movement for black people to gain more rights in America.		Tanvir knows that black Americans are still facing injustice in various ways, and they are still treated oppressively through systemic racism. He listens carefully to see what he can do for black Americans, and especially for any black Muslims in his area.
Nusrat is learning about taxes and the various policies that affect her in her college accounting class.		
Hashim will turn 12 in a few days. The shaykh at the local mosque is giving a lecture on bulūgh and his mom is encouraging him to go.	Hashim goes to the lecture for his mom but doesn't pay attention or take any notes. He thinks he'll figure out the rules when he becomes bāligh.	
Zaynab knows a local Muslim author is coming to her English class to give a workshop on good writing techniques.		

2.10 Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Imāmah

OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze the state of the Islamic world during the childhood and subsequent Imāmah of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa)
- Identify some of the accomplishments of the companions of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa)
- Recognize Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) skills in logic and debating
- Understand the importance of physical skills in conjunction with logic skills based on the emphasis on Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa)

THE BEGINNING OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S (ʿA) IMĀMAH: LIFTING THE BAN ON HĀDĪTH

Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) was born into very oppressive conditions. There were five Umayyad caliphs during his lifetime.

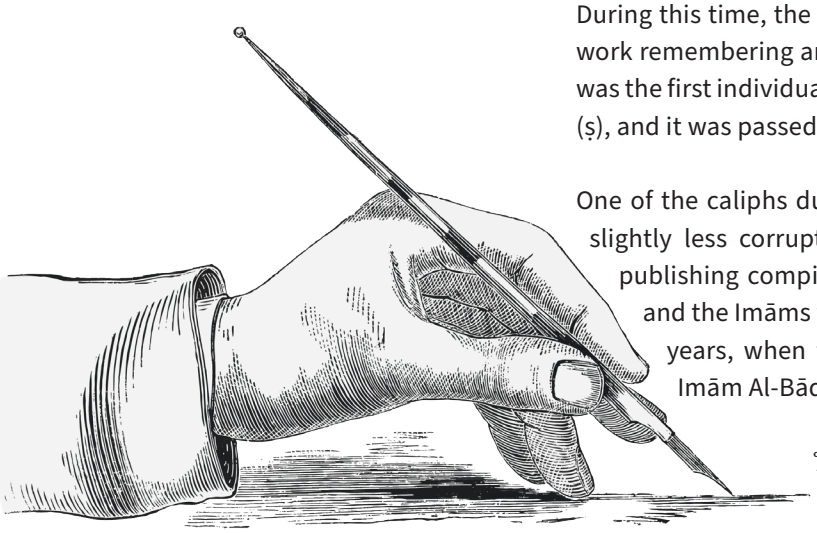
After Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) death, the corrupt leadership of the time banned the recording and compilation of his ḥadith, or Prophetic traditions, because they thought it could be confused with the words of the Qur'ān.

The years after the Prophet's (ṣ) death, in which ḥadith were not recorded, had both short-term and long-term consequences for Islam and Muslims. Imagine how many words of the Prophet (ṣ) that were lost because of this ban!

THINK ALOUD: Why is it important to preserve both the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt's (ʿa) words and actions?

As we know, the words of the Prophet (ṣ) have always been the second most important source of Islamic knowledge after the Noble Qur'ān, almost inseparable from each other! We know this because the Qur'ān itself says so in the verse,

> "So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you."[1]



During this time, the companions of our Prophet (ṣ) and the Imāms (ʿa) were hard at work remembering and writing down as many traditions as they could. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first individual to create a book with the traditions of our Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), and it was passed down from all the Imāms until it reached our fifth Imām (ʿa).

One of the caliphs during Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Imāmah, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz, was slightly less corrupt than the rest and he finally allowed the Muslims to begin publishing compiled traditions again. Since the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and the Imāms were busy preserving the words of the Maʿṣumīn (ʿa) for so many years, when the ban was lifted, many of the students and companions of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) had already memorized thousands of ḥadīth!

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAṭā, who was one of the prominent scholars at the time of the Imām (ʿa) said, "I never saw the scholars of the time

1 *Noble Qur'ān*, Al-Hashr 59:7

being so humbled by knowledge as they were in the gatherings of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī (ʿa). I saw Ḥakam ibn Utaybah, who was a noble and glorious scholar in his time, sit in front of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) as if he was overpowered."[2]

IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S (ʿA) STUDENTS

Many of the students and companions of Imām Al-Bāqir saw great progress during his Imāmah.

THINK ALOUD: What areas would Imām Al-Bāqir's companions have seen progress in? What defines progress in an Islamic community?

An important Shīʿah figure of the time was Muḥammad ibn Muslim, who was a frequent visitor of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) and Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa), said, "Whatever matter came to mind, I would ask Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa), and he would give me an answer in such a manner that I learned 30,000 traditions from him, and 16,000 traditions from Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa)."[3]

Unfortunately, in later years, especially during the period of the Abbasid Dynasty, many of the ḥādīth from this period too were destroyed.

THINK ALOUD: Why did the rulers of the time destroy aḥādīth?

Jābir ibn Ḥayyān was one of the students of Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa), who continued the school established by Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa). Jābir was an amazing scientist whose contributions in many scientific fields, particularly chemistry, are widely acknowledged today. He invented several types of laboratory equipment, as well as many chemicals widely used today.

He emphasised the scientific experimental method in his work in chemistry: "The first essential in chemistry", he declared, "is that you should perform practical work and conduct experiments, for he who performs not practical work nor makes experiments will never attain the least degree of mastery."

According to one modern western author, Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) would ask Jābir for certain useful inventions and Jābir would set about inventing these things. Apparently, Jābir invented a kind of paper that resisted fire, and an ink that could be read at night. Jābir also invented alembic, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and sulfuric acid, which we use in chemistry labs today.

The last 2-3 years of Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Imāmah (which lasted a total of 18 years) had the most progress! Sometimes, when thinking about when the Imāms (ʿa) were able to freely spread their knowledge, we immediately think about the schools and thousands of students of our sixth Imām (ʿa), but we forget the importance of the previous Imāms (ʿa) in laying the groundwork.

A DEBATE WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE CHRISTIANS

As the fifth Imām (ʿa) was leaving Damascus to return to Medina, there was a large gathering of Christian priests and monks who were waiting for the Archbishop near the palace. They wished to ask for solutions to their problems and ask questions. Once the Archbishop arrived, he asked Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa), "Are you a Christian or are you from the Muslims?" The Imām (ʿa) responded, "I am from the Muslims!"[4]

The Archbishop then asked, "Are you from their scholars or from their ignorant ones?" Imām (ʿa) responded, "I'm not from the ignorant ones!"

The Archbishop then began to respectfully ask the Imām (ʿa) a series of very difficult questions, and the Imām (ʿa) answered all of these clearly and completely. The Archbishop became angry and left, after admitting that the knowledge of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) was greater than his and that his leadership was superior.

THINK ALOUD: Analyze how Muslims and non-Muslims can both benefit from the Imām's (ʿa) words.

2 *Tadhkirat Al-Khawāṣ*, P. 337

3 *Ikhtiyār Maʿrifat Ar-Rijāl*, V. 1, P. 386

4 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 8, P. 123

Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, the caliph of the time, rather than rejoicing at the Imām's victory, became very fearful. What if the people began to realize the truth of Imāmah and the spiritual influence of the Imām (ʿa) began to grow even more? He began to spread rumors that the Imām (ʿa) wanted to convert to Christianity! However, all of Hishām's efforts to slander the Imām (ʿa) failed, and everyone was shown the truth of Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) wisdom and knowledge! Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) had many other debates with lots of people throughout his Imāmah, and everyone he debated was overcome with the truth.

IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S ARCHERY SKILLS

The last caliph during Imām Al-Bāqir's (ʿa) Imāmah was the most oppressive towards the Imām (ʿa) and went to great lengths to humiliate him. He was very threatened by Imāmah and would always set up atheists, Christians, and other Muslims to debate the Imām (ʿa). Once, while performing Ḥajj, Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) spoke to a group of people about the characteristics of the family of the Prophet (ṣ). The Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and Imām (ʿa) were a significant threat to the government of Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, so he was very intimidated by this sermon.[5] He ordered his governor to send the Imām (ʿa) and his son to Syria, where he challenged him to an archery competition, knowing quite well he didn't have the scholars to defeat the Imām (ʿa) in a scholarly debate.

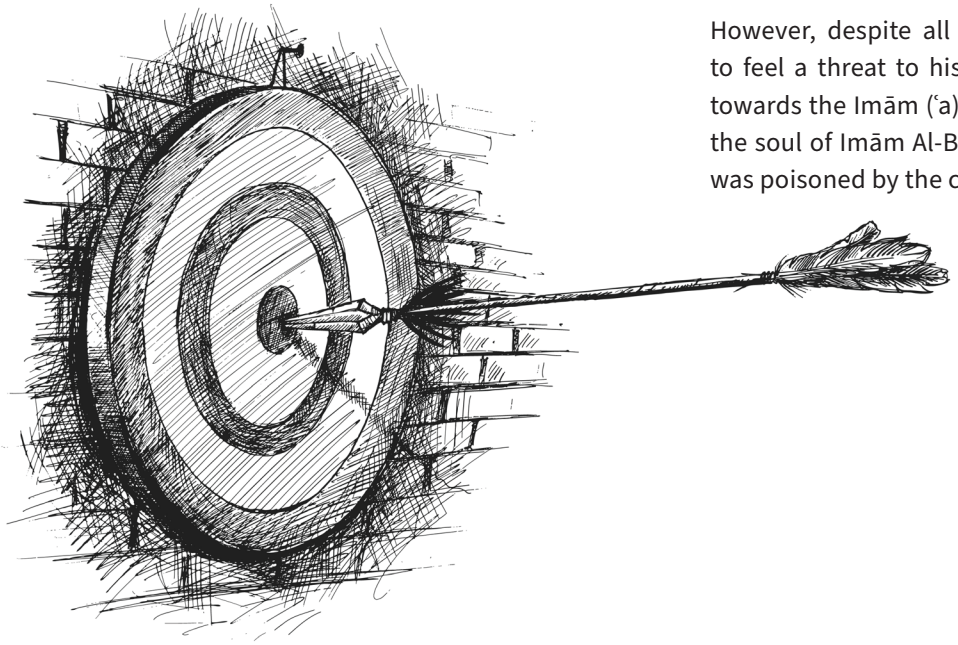
Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) was an elderly man by this time, and asked to be excused from this, but Hishām insisted, thinking he would finally get to beat the Imām (ʿa) in something. So, Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) took a bow and arrow and took his first shot, hitting the bull's eye perfectly! Hishām was shocked! The Imām (ʿa) continued, shooting a second, third, and finally nine arrows, all which perfectly hit the center of the target and split the wood! Everyone was amazed, and the caliph Hishām said, "Amazing, O Abū Jaʿfar! You are the master of archers from amongst the Arabs and non-Arabs." He continued to praise both Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) and Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) saying, "Does your son Jaʿfar also have this level of proficiency in shooting?"

Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) responded,

> "We, the Household, are the 'Perfection of the Religion' and the 'Completion of the Blessings;' the verse[6] was revealed about us (Imāmah and Wilāyah) and we succeed one another. The earth will never remain empty of one of us."[7]

THINK ALOUD: Why does Islam emphasize physical skills? How can you implement this in your own life?

However, despite all of this, the caliph, Hishām continued to feel a threat to his government. His heart did not soften towards the Imām (ʿa), and on the 7th of Dhul Ḥijjah, 114 AH, the soul of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) returned to Allah (swt) after he was poisoned by the caliph.



5 *Sire Pishvayan*, P. 349

6 *Noble Qurʿān,* Al-Māʾidah, 5:3

7 *Dalāʾil Al-Imāmah*, P. 235

Activity 2.10a: Companions of Knowledge

Pick one student of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) from the two mentioned above:

a) Muḥammad ibn Muslim

b) Jābir ibn Ḥayyān

Using online resources and the lesson, answer the questions below about one of these students.

1. What city was this student originally from?

2. What was the specialty of this companion/student of Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa)?

3. Find one ḥadīth narrated by this individual.

4. What lesson can you learn from how this individual treated the fifth Imām (ʿa)?

Activity 2.10b: An Expert Bowman

Using the space below, draw or write a few paragraphs describing the shock that people experienced when an elderly Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) managed to beat Hishām in archery.

2.11 Imām Al-Mahdī (ʿaj)

OBJECTIVES:

- Outline some of the reasons the twelfth Imām is in a concealed state
- Develop strategies to incorporate the remembrance of the Imām of our time and gain closeness to him
- Develop strategies of engaging in active intidhār (awaiting) the rightly guided Imām (ʿa)

Vocabulary Activity 2.11a

In small groups, answer one of the assigned questions. Be ready to share with the class what you think!

1. The word **ghaybah** means "Occultation", which means "in a hidden or concealed state". This refers to the twelfth Imām (ʿaj) being hidden from us. Related words in Arabic are "ghāʾib", which means absent and "ghayb", which means unseen or hidden.
   What is the difference between someone being "absent" and someone being "unseen"?
2. **Intidhār:** Waiting, which in this lesson refers to awaiting the rightly guided Imām (ʿaj), "Intidhār Al-Mahdī". People who await the Imām are known as *muntadhirīn.* What do you think "waiting" for the Imām (ʿaj) means? How do you act when you're really waiting for something to happen? What do you do?
3. **Ḥujjah:** Divine representative of Allah (swt). This can also mean "proof", like ḥujjatullāh — proof of Allah (swt).

How do you think the two definitions of ḥujjah are related?

THINK ALOUD: How does the Imām (ʿaj) affect our daily lives? Think about the last time you remembered the Imām Al-Mahdī (ʿaj). What made you think of him? Has it been a long time?

OUR NEED FOR A ḤUJJAH

At all times this Earth needs a ḥujjah — a divine representative appointed by Allah (swt). Allah (swt) created this Earth for us to reach perfection, which we learned in previous lessons can only be done through divine guides and revelation.

WHY IS IMĀM (ʿAJ) IN OCCULTATION?

The complete wisdom behind Allah's (swt) (swt) decision for the ghaybah of our twelfth Imām (ʿaj) is unknown to us. ʿAbdullah bin Faḍl Ḥāshimī once asked Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) about the reason behind the ghaybah, to which he replied: "O the son of Faḍl! The subject of ghaybah is among the divine secrets and a concealed matter whose knowledge is only with Allah (swt) (swt). Since we regard Allah (swt) (swt) to be wise, we must also affirm that His acts are based on that perfect wisdom, even when the detailed understanding is not accessible to us."

Although we do not know the complete wisdom of Allah (swt), there are some reasons for the ghaybah that previous Imāms (ʿa) have explained. One reason is that Allah (swt) wished for Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) to never be forced to give allegiance to any tyrant during his lifetime. Another reason if the Imām (ʿaj) were not in the ghaybah, his life would be in danger.

THINK ALOUD: Why would the other Imāms (ʿa) not be in occultation if their lives were also in danger?

People want to take away the right of divine guides because they sought power for themselves. All of our Imāms (ʿa) faced danger from enemies who wanted to kill them or take allegiance from them. They sought to lead the ummah because this was the responsibility given to them by Allah (swt) because they were maʿṣūm, so they did everything in the way of Allah (swt) perfectly.

During the time of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), people tried to take power from Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) because they knew that he would be fair, and not favor them. This upset our Imām (ʿa). However, he made it clear that he cared neither about power nor about money. He explained this in a famous sermon called Shaqshaqiyyah:

"...I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations… I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throat..."

THINK ALOUD: How does our Imām (ʿaj) guide us while he is in ghaybah?

Although Imām Al-Mahdī (ʿaj) is in occultation, he is still an active guide on the earth. An example that is used in the ḥadīth about our Imām (ʿaj) in occultation is that he is like the sun behind the clouds. Although he is hidden from us, we still benefit from his light.

We must also understand that the Imām (ʿaj) is hidden from us, but we are not hidden from him. He has knowledge of the state of his believers.

THINK ALOUD: What do we do while waiting for guests to come to our house?

One of the best actions for us to do during this time is to await the Imām (ʿaj) and the victory that will come with his return, as Imām Al-Jawād (ʿa) has said,

> "The best of the acts of our Shīʿah is to anticipate the deliverance (faraj)."

This ḥadīth refers to the return of the 12th Imām (ʿaj), and the word "acts" is important because we should be actively waiting for the Imām.

What does it mean to actively wait for something? When we talk about waiting for a guest to arrive, we prepare for them to come. We may get dressed in our nicest clothes and make sure that our house is clean and that everything is neat. If the guest comes to our house and everything is a mess, we can't say we were waiting for them to come.

If we want to actively await the Imām and be one of his true followers. We should do our responsibilities towards him as if we were with us.

In Duʿā Al-Nudbah, we say,

> "May my soul be ransom for you; for although you are hidden from us, you have never abandoned us. May my soul be ransom for you; for although you are away, you have never been away from us."

STAYING CONNECTED TO THE IMĀM (ʿAJ)

We should try to remember the Imām (ʿaj) in our daily life. While some of the ways we can do this are prescribed, like the specific aʿmāl we can read for him, we can also speak to our Imām (ʿaj) whenever we want. We can send salām to him or speak to him silently inside our hearts. Sometimes we may hear people saying **"Ya ʿAlī Madad"**, calling for help from Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), or **"Ya Mahdī Adriknī"**, calling for help from Imām Mahdī (ʿaj).

We can speak to him in our own words, ask for his return, and tell him we wish we could be better. We can ask him to pray to Allah (swt) for us for whatever we may be having trouble with, so that we can be one of his true followers. We should know that even though we cannot ordinarily see Imām Mahdī (ʿaj), he is able to help and guide us if we strive to get closer to him or ask for his help with sincerity.

We can also write an arīḍah, a letter to the Imām (ʿaj) and put it in flowing water or at the gravesite of one of the Imāms (ʿa). Although we can still speak to him without this, sometimes symbolic actions have effects that we are unaware of.

Some of the aʿmāl we can do for our Imām are:

- Ṣalāh of Imām Mahdī (ʿaj)
- Duʿā Al-Ḥujjah
- Duʿā Al-Faraj
- Duʿā Al-Nudbā
- Duʿā Al-Aḥd
- Do good deeds/ ṣadaqah/ ziyārah on his behalf

Most importantly, we should strive to follow the example of the Imām (ʿaj) in such a way that we would act the same if he were with us right now.

Activity 2.11b:

Directions: Sarah and her older brother Jawad are on their way back from Sunday School. Sarah has a lot of questions after her Islamic Studies class. Help Jawad answer Sarah's questions.

Sarah: Jawad, my Islamic Studies class was really confusing today, but I want to understand Imām Mahdī (ʿa). I understand that our Imām is in a concealed state, but why does it have to be this way? Wouldn't it be better for us if he was living with us?

Jawad: I used to have a lot of the same questions Sarah, and sometimes I still ask questions about the Imāms (ʿa). I understand this concealed state best by:

Sarah: Hmm, okay Jawad I think I understand now, but what should we be doing now while he is in occultation? I know my teacher said we should wait for the Imām (ʿaj), but how does that help?

Jawad:

Sarah: I wish I could be close to the Imām (ʿaj) now.

Jawad: Sarah, don't be sad, there are still ways to be close to the Imām (ʿaj) now.

Sarah: How? He is so far from us, we don't even know where he is.

Jawad:

Activity 2.11c: Waiting for my Imām (ʿaj)

Look at the section "Our Responsibilities towards our Imām (ʿaj)" again. What are some actions that you plan to do to truly wait for your Imām (ʿaj)? When do you plan to do them?

ACTION	WHEN OR HOW I PLAN TO DO THIS ACTION

NOTES

CHAPTER 3

History of Prophets

3.1 Prophet Ādam (ʿa), the First Human Being

3.2 Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) Perseverance

3.1 Prophet Ādam (ʿa), the First Human Being

OBJECTIVES:

- Explain the circumstances of the creation of Prophet Ādam (ʿa)
- Analyze the difference between a law of God and advice from Allah
- Identify the various kinds of arrogance in the framework of the story of Iblīs's refusal to prostrate to Prophet Ādam (ʿa)
- Identify the signs of pride and its dangerousness

Ḥujjah

Divine representative of Allah

Proof of Allah (swt)

This lesson is an overview of the story of Ādam (ʿa) from the perspective for the Qurʾān. In it, we will learn a significant message about the evil of pride.

All Abrahamic religions (including Islam) say that Prophet Ādam (ʿa) was the very first human being created. The details of his creation and the resulting beliefs have influenced the core of many religions.

In the story of Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Ḥawwā (ʿa) in the Bible, Christians typically believe in a concept known as the "original sin". They believe that Ādam (ʿa) and Ḥawwā (ʿa) committed a sin by eating from the tree, and so all humans, who are their children, are born sinners.

They also typically believe that women have a defect because they believe Ḥawwā (ʿa)encouraged Prophet Ādam (ʿa) to eat from the tree. But as Muslims, we know from the incredible miracle of the knowledge of the Noble Qurʾān that these beliefs are not correct. We will discuss the status of Lady Ḥawwā (ʿa) in Islam, and the potential for both men and women to reach the highest levels of perfection, which we were created for.

THE CREATION OF ĀDAM (ʿA) AND ḤAWWĀ (ʿA)

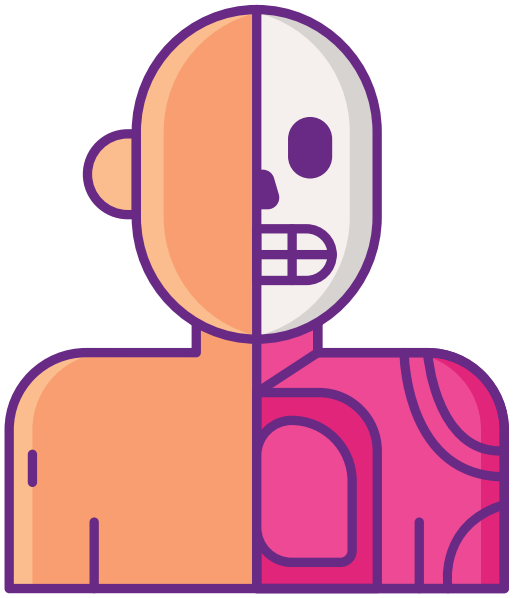
Allah (swt) in the Noble Qurʾān in various places describes the creation of human beings:

We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. So blessed be God, the fairest of creators![1]

And when your Lord said to the angels,

"See, 'I am creating a mortal of clay of mud moulded. When I have shaped him, and breathed My spirit in him, fall you down, bowing before him!"[2]

Allah (swt) has created human beings in an extremely precise manner. Each stage is a wondrous miracle. The last stage, which Allah (swt) describes as "breathing" His "spirit", is the stage of the creation of the human soul or spirit. The soul is so precious that Allah (swt) refers to it as "My" spirit.



THINK ALOUD: Discuss how different stages of the lives of human beings, from the womb to the deathbed, are miraculous.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Muʿminūn 23:12-14

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* An-Naḥl 16:28-29

THE ANGELS PROSTRATE TO ĀDAM (ʿA)

As we read in the last verse, the angels were commanded to prostrate to Ādam (ʿa).

Let us read the story from the Noble Qurʾān:

"And [after creating Ādam] Allah taught Ādam all the names. Then He presented those to the angels and said, "Tell me the names of these if you are true. They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are surely the All-Knowing, the Wise." [Then] He said, "O Ādam! Tell them the names of those [persons]." When Ādam told them those names, Allah said [to the angels], "Didn't I say to you that I know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you manifest and what you hide."

And when We said to the angels,

"Prostrate before Ādam."

All of them prostrated except Iblīs, who refused and was haughty, and [thus] he became one of the unbelievers.

"[After creating Eve), We said, "O Ādam, Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat from it [freely] as many [things] as you wish; but do not approach this tree, otherwise you will become one of the dhālimīn اَلظّٰلِمِيْنَ."

"But the Shayṭān made them slip from that [Garden by luring them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree] and thus got them out from the state [of felicity] in which they had been."

So We said [to Ādam, Eve, and the Shayṭān that, "All of you] get down [from the Garden to the earth] some of you being the enemies of the other, and there is on the earth your abode and the necessities [of life] for a [fixed period of] time." [Ādam felt ashamed and intended to ask Allah's forgiveness.] So Ādam learnt some words from his Lord, and Allah turned to him mercifully. Surely He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful. We said, "All of you get down from the Garden. [Once you are on the earth], guidance will certainly come to you from Me: whosoever follows My guidance, there will be no fear for them nor shall they grieve. But those who disbelieve and reject Our revelation, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide."

We learn several things from this story:

1. Allah (swt) created Prophet Ādam (ʿa) with special knowledge. The angels thought they knew everything but were embarrassed when Allah (swt) informed them that Ādam (ʿa) knew more than they did. We have to remember that we cannot become haughty and proud about what we know and even if we do we have to become humble when the truth is shown to us.
2. Iblīs refused to accept the truth because of his arrogance and pride. Even though all the others prostrated, he did not. Later in this lesson we will discuss the evils of pride.
3. Ādam (ʿa) and Ḥawwā (ʿa) were asked not to approach a tree. This was a recommendation, not an order. In Islam, there are two types of commands Allah (swt) gives to His creation:[3]
   - **a)** A law: Where Allah (swt) decrees a command which has to be fulfilled and failure to do so results in punishment. (eg. ṣalāh)
   - **b)** Advice: Where Allah (swt) says to do something but the action to be done is not wājib; rather the command is simply a guiding command and advice which is meant to make life for that person easier. Not doing that action does not result in sin but may have natural consequences. This is the kind of order Prophet Ādam (ʿa) received regarding the tree. The garden was not a place of reward and punishment for actions.
4. The natural consequence of Prophet Ādam (ʿa) not following the advice was that he and his wife had to leave the garden and now had to face the normal difficulties of life. There is a cause and effect relationship to every action that we do, and the effect of this action was that they began this journey.
5. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) sought forgiveness for his actions. Allah (swt) forgave him and gave him the great news of guidance.
6. After he was forgiven, Prophet Ādam (ʿa) saw that his status was even higher and that he had the potential to take his God-given talents to reach statuses that he could not imagine before.

IBLĪS (SHAYṬĀN) WAS PROUD AND ARROGANT

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

"And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Ādam,' they prostrated, but not Iblīs: he refused and acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless."[4]

In the āyah above, we see that Allah (swt) describes Iblīs (Shayṭān) as one who acted out of kibr, or arrogance. One of the lessons we learn is that Shayṭān's arrogance was his downfall after praying amongst the angels.

Shayṭān thought he was better than Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and despite being shown the truth he was stubborn and arrogant. If we show any such characteristics in our lives, we can be put in the same category as Shayṭān on the Day of Judgment.

There are three main types of pride:

1. **Arrogance against Allah (swt):** This is disbelief (kufr). It is like what Shayṭān did. We can be arrogant against Allah (swt) when we do not follow Allah's (swt) command purposefully or when we question His laws and commands, because we think we know better.
2. **Arrogance against the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and the Imāms (ʿa):** Where we think we know more than them and accuse them of giving wrong teachings or making wrong decisions.
3. **Arrogance against other people:** This is where we think we are better than others for any reason whether it be nationalistic, due to our wealth, our possessions, our knowledge etc.

Each of these types of arrogance is forbidden in Islam and would cause someone to have the characteristics of Shayṭān.

The Noble Prophet (ṣ) has said:

> "One who humbles himself before Allah is raised by Him in status; and the one who is arrogant will be degraded by Allah."[5]

3 eHawza – *Ancient Prophets for the Modern World- Prophet Ādam (ʿa)* – Sem. 2

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:34

5 *Greater Sins (Dastagahaib Shirazi),* Ch. 3

SIGNS OF PRIDE

1. If in gatherings and social events a person dislikes not being in a position of leadership or being the center of attention.
2. If one finds it difficult to say salām or show humility to a person lower than him in social status.
3. If it is difficult for one to accept the invitation of poor people or to sit with beggars.
4. If he feels it is below his dignity to perform physical and unclean work such as sweeping the floor, cleaning a bathroom or something similar, it is a sign of pride.
5. Committing a sin, big or small, is a sign of pride in front of Allah (swt).

SPOTLIGHT: ḤAWWĀ (ʿA), FIRST FEMALE CREATED

The word حواء in Arabic comes from the root word ḥayy ح-ى-ى, meaning living. She was one of the first two living human beings, and she is the mother of all of creation after her, so this name is especially appropriate for her.

Allah (swt) created the first human, Prophet Ādam (ʿa) from dust. His wife Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) was created from the remaining clay from Prophet Ādam (ʿa), and they resided in Heaven together amongst the angels.

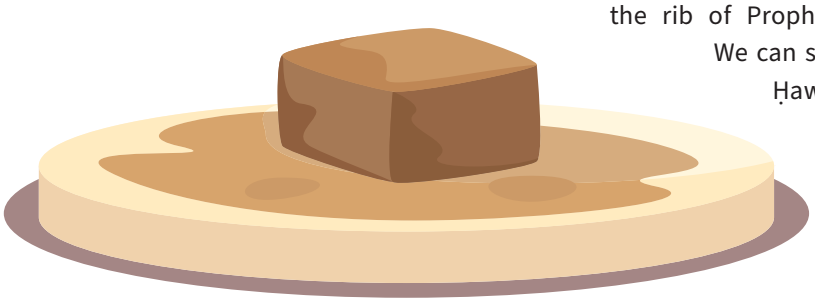
Other Abrahamic religions have alternate opinions about her creation. Some think that she was created from the ribs of Prophet Ādam (ʿa). Some believe that Ḥawwāʾ(ʿa) encouraged Prophet Ādam (ʿa) to eat from the tree that Allah (swt) had forbidden them from, because Shayṭān influenced her to convince Prophet Ādam (ʿa).

Muslims of other schools of thought also believe that she was created from a part of the rib of Prophet Ādam (ʿa), and they claim that this shows the inferiority of men to women.

As we discussed before, the Qurʾān contradicts these beliefs.

THINK ALOUD: Why would some Muslims believe that Ḥawwā (ʿa) was created from a rib of her husband?

Through authentic chains we know that a companion asked Imām Al-Baqir (ʿa) how the Almighty created Ḥawwā (ʿa). The Imām (ʿa) asked in turn what other people say about her creation. He was told they think Allah (swt) created her from the rib of Prophet Adam (ʿa). The Imām (ʿa) said that this is a lie. We can see from this ḥadith that it is not correct to believe that Ḥawwā (ʿa) was created from Adam (ʿa) himself.



If we think on all the resources we have available that show us the status of men and women, especially the status of the four women of heaven (Lady Āsiyah (ʿa), Lady Maryam (ʿa), Lady Khadijah (ʿa), Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa)),

we know that women have the same potential to reach the highest levels of perfection. All humans have a fiṭrah (innate nature) that takes us closer to Allah (swt) when we work to remove sins from our lives and pray to Allah (swt) to forgive us. Our physical appearances may vary, but Allah (swt) has made humans (all of us) have the potential to be the most perfect of any of His creatures.

PROPHET ĀDAM (ʿA) AND ʿARAFAH

After some time, they were both sent down to earth, but in separate places. This was a test for them. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) was sent down to Sarandīb, Sri Lanka, according to some traditions. Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) was sent down to Jeddah, a city whose name means "grandmother" because Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) is the grandmother of all humanity.

Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa), now separated, had to find their way back to each other on foot. The walk was long, and Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) was only able to go a short distance at a time. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) walked day and night for forty years on Earth to find his wife. At the end of their journey toward each other, they met in ʿArafah on the mountain of Raḥmah — Mercy. This mountain is named Raḥmah because when Prophet Ādam (ʿa) was asking for forgiveness and doing ṭawbah (repentance) for his mistake, Allah (swt) revealed to him His Asmāʾ Al-Ḥusnā, His All-Beautiful names.

Through this, the mercy of Allah (swt) was revealed in the form of a duʾā: Prophet Ādam (ʿa) received these 'words' from his Lord.[6]

These kalamāt have three main components. Seeking intercession to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), acknowledging one's shortcomings, and seeking Allah's (swt) pardon.

On the plains of ʿArafah stands Jabal Ar-Raḥmah (The Mountain of Mercy) where Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) met, and at the foot of which they supplicated and repented. All the prophets had najwā or conversed intimately with Allah (swt) on this mountain.

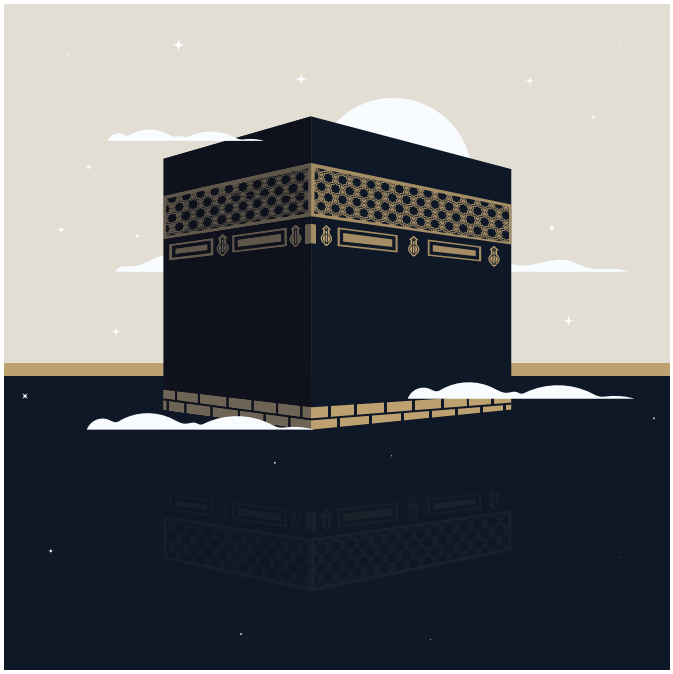
It is a piece of heaven because Allah's (swt) mercy falls here. Allah (swt) asked Prophet Ādam (ʿa) if he wanted to see his status in the eyes of Allah (swt) before and after he asked for forgiveness. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) was surprised that his status was elevated so much after he asked for forgiveness due to the trials and tribulations he experienced. His previous status was given by Allah (swt) but this one was a status he had earned. Allah (swt) then asked if Prophet Ādam (ʿa) would like to go back to the garden, Prophet Ādam (ʿa) said that he would rather stay on this Earth with Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) because they had seen that only in this dunyā (world) did they have the possibility of reaching such a high status and optimizing their potential. There, they also established the first family system.

After this, Prophet Ādam (ʿa) and Lady Ḥawwāʾ (ʿa) walked to mashʿar (a religious site in ḥajj) and made a covenant with Allah (swt), saying,

> "O Allah, from now onward since you gave me this privilege of khalīfatullāh (the vicegerent/ representative of Allah (swt)), help me fulfill this duty."

After this, the pair continued to Minā, then Mecca.

In Mecca, Allah (swt) commanded Prophet Ādam (ʿa) to make the Kaʿbah, the house of Allah (swt), and alongside it Prophet Ādam (ʿa) should make his own house to live with his family. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) now found complete tranquility as he established Allah's (swt) house and his family's home side by side in tawḥīd (Divine Unity) and submission.



6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:37

Activity 3.1a: Class Discussion

In the worksheet below, identify the "type" of arrogance this kind of behaviour falls into. Recall that we discussed:

1. Arrogance against Allah (swt)
2. Arrogance against the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and the Imāms (ʿa)
3. Arrogance against other people

SCENARIO	TYPE OF ARROGANCE	WHERE I HAVE SEEN IT IN MY LIFE
Shaytān chose to not prostrate himself to Prophet Ādam (ʿa) when Allah (swt) had commanded him to.		
A man curses Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) and his mother, and says the Imām (ʿa) are not Muslims.		
Daniyah tells Umamah that her worship is better than Umamah's because Daniyah got a better grade in Sunday School.		
Naim does not do wudu properly because he doesn't think it's necessary to complete Ṣalah.		
Lina thinks the Prophet (ṣ) didn't know what today's society would be like, so his advice doesn't apply to her life.		

Now, write a few sentences on how you can try and keep yourself away from these types of arrogance and prideful behavior.

Activity 3.1b: Review Questions

Choose one lesson we can learn from the story of the angels bowing down to Prophet Ādam (ʿa) but Shayṭān refusing to do so. Write down the lesson and why you chose this one

How can you apply this lesson in your own life?

Activity 3.1c: Review Questions

1. Prophet Ādam (ʿa) disobeyed a command of Allah (swt) that was:

   a. A law
   b. Advice
   c. Both of the above

2. Ḥawwā (ʿa)**:**

   a. Was responsible for inviting Ādam (ʿa) to sin
   b. Disobeyed the law of Allah (swt)
   c. Ate from the tree along with Ādam (ʿa)

3. Pride is bad because:

   a. It is the source of all other evil acts
   b. Shayṭān was proud
   c. It can destroy all good actions
   d. All the above

3.2 Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) Perseverance

OBJECTIVES

- Outline the major events in the life of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) up to the flood
- Identify the perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) through the time and effort he spent on guiding his people
- Compare and contrast good perseverance with incorrect perseverance
- Analyze the role of perseverance in learning and other everyday activities

"It was said, 'O Noah! Disembark in peace from Us and with [Our] blessings upon you."[1]

"Peace to Noah, throughout the nations!"[2]

Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) was one of the very earliest Prophets sent by Allah (swt) to a people who were worshipping idols and who had gone astray in their actions and beliefs.

"Indeed We sent Noah to his people, [saying,] 'Warn your people before a painful punishment overtakes them."[3]

Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) was a Prophet and a Messenger who received revelation and had the responsibility of guiding his people to the right path. He is also one of the five principal law making (*Ūlul ʿAzm*) Prophets who came with a message and a book of laws for people to follow.

PROPHET NŪḤ (ʿA): AN EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance means to have steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose or a state in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement. This means not giving up on the truth no matter how difficult it becomes. Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) was one man who never gave up on his mission to guide his people to the right path.

Let's see how Allah (swt) shows Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) perseverance in the Qurʾān.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Hūd, 11:48
2 *Noble Qur'ān*, As-Ṣāffāt, 37:79
3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Nūḥ, 71:1

Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) has been introduced to us as a symbol of patience. The reason behind this is that he preached the message of Allah (swt) for 950 years, with only a few people believing in him (only eight according to one ḥadīth!). The Qurʾān says he was a Prophet who used common sense and logic, kind words and was very gentle and compassionate to his people. However, even after so many years of teaching and preaching, not many people listened to him.

THINK ALOUD: Do you think it was easy for Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) to not give up on his people?

All of his followers were poor people, because the wealthy people were too proud to listen to what Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) had to say.

"He said, 'O my people, worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous day."[4]

The chiefs of the people laughed at Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa). One of their leaders stepped forth and said, "You are nothing but a man like us. We don't see anything special about you. You have only a few followers and they are the poorest and the lowest among us. We do not think that you are better than we are. In fact, we think you are a liar!"

THINK ALOUD: What are some reasons people might think that "normal people" can't be Prophets? Why did this happen to almost all of our Prophets?

The chiefs thought that just because they had a lot of money, they were better than Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) and his followers. They used this as an excuse not to believe. The leaders of the town became upset and angry because Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) had made good and convincing arguments but one of the chiefs finally said, "O Nūḥ! You have argued with us so many times and we still don't care what you say. We don't believe you."

The Qurʾān then describes what Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) felt after so much effort and time with these stubborn people:

He said, "My Lord! Indeed, I have summoned my people night and day, but my summons only increases their evasion. Indeed whenever I have summoned them, so that You might forgive them, they would put their fingers into their ears and draw their cloaks over their heads, and they were persistent [in their unfaith], and disdainful in [their] arrogance."[5]

After preaching and being patient for 950 years, Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) people reached the stage that they would not believe anymore.

4 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aʿrāf, 7:59

5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Nūḥ, 71:5-9

Allah (swt) knew that no more of Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) people would come to believe if they were given more time. In fact, if they had been given more time, they would also mislead those who had already believed.

Allah (swt) revealed to Prophet Nūḥ to build an ark. His people started mocking and ridiculing him. He simply kept quiet and kept doing his job.

Prophet Nūḥ then asked Allah (swt) to not leave any trace of them on the Earth:

"And Nūḥ said: My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers"

Then a huge flood began. Even after the flood began, people were given a chance to embark upon the ark. Nūḥ was ordered to take with him his family (except his son), a pair of each domestic animal, and the believers who believed in Nūḥ (ʿa).

"When Our edict came and the oven gushed [a stream of water], We said, 'Carry in it a pair of every kind [of animal], along with your family — except those [of them] against whom the edict has already been given — and those who have faith.' And none believed in him except a few."

Allah (swt) therefore destroyed all the disbelievers including the son of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) who refused to believe in Allah (swt), by drowning them in the flood. He saved Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) and those who believed with the Ark that He guided them to build.

PERSEVERE: To persist in anything undertaken; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly.

AL-ISTIQĀMAH

It is important to note the difference between perseverance and effort. There are some people who do make efforts in the beginning, yet they break down when confronted with difficulties. We should not just start a task and then give up easily. Instead, we should keep our motivation and determination and overcome any obstacles we might face and work through them. This is one of the lessons we learn from the story of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa).

Every triumph is not of the same kind. Sometimes it arrives early and sometimes it takes a long time. One must not expect that everything would be done in the same manner and that everything will end in success.

THINK ALOUD: How can persevering help a person be a better Muslim?

A great Muslim scholar narrates the following story: “I have learnt firm determination from an insect called a scorpion. Once I was sitting near a clean and shining pillar in the masjid when I observed that a tiny insect was attempting to climb the upright stone pillar to reach a lamp that was on the top. I kept sitting the whole night and observing until dawn how relentlessly that insect was struggling to climb up the slippery column. I counted 700 attempts when it was falling down from the middle of the path because the pillar was very smooth and glassy.

Its legs could not hold on. I was extremely astonished to see the extraordinary determination of that little insect. As it was time for Fajr, I got up from my place, performed wuḍūʾ and engaged in worship. After concluding my prayers, I looked back toward the pillar to find to my absolute astonishment that, as a result of its perseverance and untiring effort, the insect had achieved its aim and was sitting close to the burning light!”

THE ROLE OF PERSEVERANCE IN LEARNING

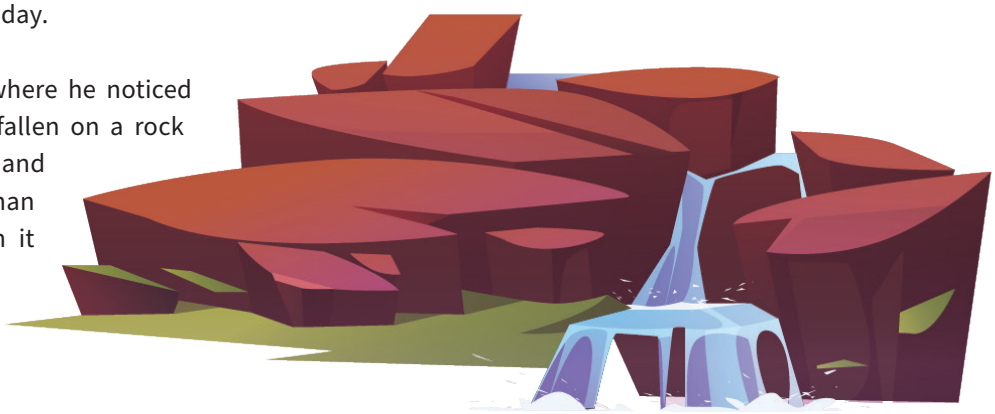
The story of a famous 7th century scholar, Sakkaki, is also very interesting. He was a blacksmith who once, with great difficulty, made an exquisite gift for the king of the time. When he went to deliver it, the king was pleased with what he saw. Just then, someone came into the court and everyone showed him respect.

Sakkaki asked about the person, and people told him that he was one of the scholars. Sakkaki became enchanted with the idea of gaining knowledge, and he went to the local school to begin to study at the age of thirty. His teachers were not at all hopeful of his success, but he was filled with zeal and enthusiasm. With a view to test the extent of his intelligence a teacher asked him to memorize the following line: “The teacher says that the skin of a dog becomes clean and pure by tanning.”

Sakkaki was supposed to learn this sentence by heart. He repeated it many times and was ready to recite it when he was called on. The next day the teacher asked him to recite the sentence in front of all the other students. He stood up at once to say, “The dog says the teacher’s skin becomes clean and pure by tanning.” Hearing this, everyone, including the teacher, burst into laughter.

Yet this experience did not make give up studying, and he followed the same course for another ten years. But naturally, due to his age, his power to learn and understand was becoming weaker day by day.

Once he went into the forest to study where he noticed that drops of rainwater had constantly fallen on a rock and made marks on it. He thought over it and told himself, “My heart is not harder than this rock. If drops of knowledge fall on it constantly like these raindrops they too would certainly leave imprints on it, at least to some extent.” He returned home and began to study even harder.



At last, as a result of his perseverance and the help of Allah (swt), even though he was originally Persian, he became a distinguished personality of the literary circles of the Arab world. He authored *Miftāḥ Ul-ʿUlūm*, which was, for many years, the primary textbook in Arabic grammar and is still studied in some seminaries.

THINK ALOUD: In what circumstances can perseverance be detrimental?

Perseverance in continuing to sin, or perseverance when it hurts you or others' lives is dangerous. For example, if someone has severe internal bleeding after a skiing accident, an incorrect form of perseverance would be to insist on skiing a difficult course the next weekend.

Refer to the āyah quoted above. We can see that Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) tells Allah (swt), "and they were persistent [in their unfaith]." Even the Qurʾān acknowledges that there are types of persistence which are harmful to people.

Good perseverance is among the distinctive features of a muʾmin. Allah (swt) has given glad tidings to those who observe fortitude and perseverance in their affairs. In fact, this is the best means of leading one's life and keys to success in this world and hereafter.

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) has said,
One who is steadfast (perseveres) shall get Paradise.[6]

6 *Nahj Al-Balāghah*, Sermon 119

LESSON REFERENCES

- *Secrets of Success*, by Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani - http://www.al-islam.org/secretsofsuccess/title.htm
- *Ancient Prophets for a Modern World* – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
- Nahj Al-Balāghah
- *The Story of Prophet Nūḥ* - http://en.rafed.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3074:prophet-noah&catid=361:the-prophets&Itemid=865

Activity 3.2a: The Perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa)

Good perseverance is among the distinctive features of a muʾmin. In the space below, draw Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) with the ark.

You may choose to include people walking by and ridiculing Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) and the handful of supporters who helped him. Or, you could show people boarding the ship as heavy rains start.

Activity 3.2b: Duʿā of Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa)

أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

"I have been overcome, so help [me]."[7]

Note that Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) did not ask Allah (swt) why this calamity was happening to him. His simple and eloquent duʿā can be applied to our own lives very easily.

Below, describe a time when you felt overwhelmed (do not share with others). Then, recite this duʿā in a whisper. After that, write what specifically you would have needed in the situation to feel less overwhelmed.

7 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Qamar, 54:10

Activity 3.2c: Review Questions

1. How long did Prophet Nūḥ (ʿa) guide and preach his people for:
   a. 2000 years
   b. 950 years
   c. 300 years

2. Why did Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) son also get punished and drown?
   a. He disbelieved in Allah (swt)
   b. He thought he could swim out of the flood
   c. He tried to save other people

3. What is the most important lesson we learn from Prophet Nūḥ's (ʿa) Life?
   a. That we should always remain firm and persevere in the path of Allah (swt)
   b. That we should train our children to be more obedient
   c. That we should pray to Allah (swt) to punish the bad people immediately

CHAPTER 4

Contemporary Muslims

4.1 Our ʿUlamāʾ

4.1 Our ʿUlamāʾ

OBJECTIVES:

- Review the meaning of *true* knowledge
- Compare and contrast the role of the ʿulamāʾ to the maʿṣūmīn's role
- Explain the difference between modeling and copying, and what purpose the ʿulamāʾ should have in our communities
- Analyze the life of ʿAllāmah Tabatabai

THINK ALOUD: What does it mean to have true knowledge?

In a ḥadīth, the Prophet (ṣ), speaking on the importance of knowledge, said: "The people who are closest to the rank of Prophethood are the people of knowledge and striving."

There are many other ḥādīth speaking to the significance and beauty of learning in Islam:

The Prophet (ṣ): The quest for knowledge is incumbent (wājib) upon every Muslim.

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa): Knowledge is life.

The Prophet (ṣ): A little knowledge is better than a lot of worship.

The Prophet (ṣ): Verily everything seeks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, including the fishes in the sea, the reptiles on the land, and the predators and livestock of the earth.

ʿULAMĀʾ: OUR CONNECTION TO THE MAʿṢŪMĪN (ʿA)

The true and pious ʿulamāʾ are our connection to the Maʿṣūmīn (ʿa) because they have spent their lives studying Islam, acting upon it, and teaching it to others. They have studied ḥadīth, history, Qurʾān, etc. in order to gain a deep understanding of these topics.

They want to teach and guide us towards the correct understanding/practice of Islam. This makes them the general representatives of Islam because what they say is listened to by the people — that is why an ʿālim has to be very careful not to make incorrect judgements/statements in regards to religion because it will misguide others. Our 12th and current Imām, Imām Mahdī (ʿaj), has said,

"They (the righteous, knowledgeable ʿulamāʾ) are my hujjat upon you, and I am the hujjat of Allah upon them".

In this saying, *hujjat* means proof, evidence, and representative. Because of the presence of pious ʿulamāʾ, no one will be able to complain that the Imām (ʿaj) of the time didn't have any representatives or proof of his being the Imām (ʿaj).

In addition, we can trust the riṣalāh (book of laws) of ʿulamāʾ because it is derived from the Qurʾān and sunnah — it is not "created" by them, but rather extracted from those sources. Without their riṣalāh we would not know the basics of how to worship Allah (swt)!

ROLE MODELS

THINK ALOUD: What does it mean for our ʿulamāʾ to be role models? How are they different from other people that are normally taken as role models?

True and pious ʿUlamāʾ also serve as role models for us who show us the path towards Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) by how they live. Unlike other role models who usually only model for us in a specific area or a few areas (e.g. a basketball athlete), our ʿulamāʾ can be holistic role models because they show us how to practice *Islam*, and Islam touches on all areas of one's life. We see it in how they learn, how they treat others, how they interact with family, how they organize their life, their carefulness in regards to ʿibādah, and all other areas of their life. They are especially role models when it comes to akhlāq.

Let's look at an example. Imām Khomeini, when he was alive, never passed on his tasks to others or requested others to do things for him — he did whatever needed to be done himself. When he noticed from his roof (many Iranian homes have accessible roofs) that the bathroom light was left on inside he would not ask his wife, children, or anyone else to turn it off but would himself go down three flights of stairs to turn it off.

Likewise, when he sometimes needed a pen or something else from upstairs he would not even ask his children to get it. In the 60 years that he lived with his wife, *not once* did he request her to bring him a glass of water; rather, he would always get it himself. Of course it wouldn't be wrong of him to occasionally ask his wife or children to get him something. Doing so would be quite normal, and they would have gladly wanted to help him out and earn rewards with Allah (swt) for doing so. But his standards were that high and his respect for them so much that he did not even allow himself to do *that*. Also, perhaps he wanted to set an example for others who might *expect* others to serve them.

ROLE MODELS IN WHAT AREAS?

While true ʿulamāʾ can be models for us in many areas, three in particular stand out - education, character, and appearance.

1. Education

The first thing we think of regarding ʿulamāʾ is their education. It is having a deep education in Islam and acting upon it that makes someone truly an ʿālim, after all. Their dedication and diligence in their education serves as a model for us *no matter* what field or topic one is learning about.

2. Character

Islam is our life map. It guides us towards self-perfection and living the best of lives, the biggest part of that being one's akhlāq. Akhlāq has such significance in Islam that *that is why Islam was sent*. Divine (sent by God rather than created by humans) religions serve two main functions: (1) bring people to know Allah (swt) and (2) bring people to reflect Allah's (swt) perfection, the latter of which is akhlāq. The Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said that he was sent so that he may complete for us (teach us) the highest of virtues.

The pious ʿulamāʾ serve as some of our greatest examples of akhlāq because their whole lives are focused on learning Islam and practicing it, and this shines in their akhlāq.

It was said that ʿAllāmah Tabatabai never mentioned anybody's name with ill-feeling, nor did he ever mention anything negative about anyone - he always prayed for the well-being of others. He was also very humble, and when asked a question, he would answer. But if he did not know the answer, he would say without shame, "I do not know." In fact, even when he did have a response, he would first say, "I don't know," perhaps because he wanted to acknowledge that despite whatever he did know, there was always room to know more! Most people don't like to admit they do not know something and instead, when they are asked, they try to come up with a creative answer.

When with his s tudents, if someone would refer to him as *ustādh* (professor) he would say, *"I do not like this title! We have gathered here as colleagues in thought so that we might discover the truths of Islam."*

His akhlāq at home was outstanding and shows his high level love, respect, and concern he had for his family. His daughter narrates:

> His [ʿAllāmah's] behavior with my mother was incredibly respectful and friendly. Through his actions it seemed as if he was always eager to see my mother. We never saw them order each other to do or not do anything, nor did we see any discord between the two of them. They were loving, loyal and forgiving to each other to such an extent that we thought they never disagreed. The two of them were truly like two friends with each other.
> Prior to her death, my mother was ill and confined to bed for 27 days. During this period my father did not leave her bedside for a single moment. He left all his work to take care of her.

MODELING VS. COPYING

To model is not the same as copying. Copying is not what we're supposed to do with our ʿulamāʾ. They are models in the *principles* (values) they follow, not necessarily the exact specific behaviors that result from those principles.

Every situation is different and what we can do is extract the qualities we can learn from our ʿulamāʾ, but imitating their behavior as is may not be appropriate.

ʿULAMĀʾ ARE NOT THE MAʿṢŪMĪN (ʿA)

While ʿulamāʾ are great role models in many areas this does not mean they are perfect role models. We cannot look at them the way we look at Prophets and Imāms, taking every action and word of theirs as divine and on the correct path.

In addition, just because they are learned in Islam does not mean they know *everything* there is to know about Islam or can answer every question — only a divine guide can do that. Someone once asked a scholar a question to which he did not know the answer. The man, angry that he would not answer, asked the scholar why he wore the amāmah (turban) on his head and called himself a scholar but couldn't answer his question. The scholar told him,

> "This amāmah is what I *do* know — if I were to wear an amāmah showing what I *don't* know, it would be so big I could not even wear it!"

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

There are good and bad of everything, and likewise with ʿulamāʾ. There are good ʿulamāʾ who have studied and continue to study hard and carefully for the sake of Allah (swt). They practice what they preach and learn. They are humble, and if they make mistakes they apologize and acknowledge their faults.

THINK ALOUD: Some people say that we should be able to learn good content from anyone, regardless of their character. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

There are others who may have studied for ulterior motives, not have studied properly or carefully, and/or who do not practice what they know. They might be tricked by Shayṭān in order to use their position to serve themselves or others instead of serving Allah (swt). The Qurʾān and the Ahl ul-Bayt (ʿa) have condemned such people. That is why we should always be careful to not just look at the clothing someone wears and how well they speak but to also be sure about their qualifications and their character before placing our trust in them.

CONCLUSION: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH WHAT YOU WISH TO BECOME

Imagine that you were a sponge and like a sponge, you absorbed everything around you. You would only want to surround yourself with good and clean things. This is precisely how our souls/minds/hearts work - whatever we expose ourselves to affects us in some way or another, be it small or great. Just as they say, "You are what you eat", the parallel for the soul would be, "You are what or whom you surround yourself with".

The soul is colored by its environment and what you engage yourself in. Therefore, if you want to change your thoughts, your qualities, and your values for the better, you have to surround yourself with things and people that are better. Surround yourself with the things and people you want to become. In this way, surrounding ourselves with the ʿulamāʾ (true/good ones) is a remedy for the soul, because not only do we learn from their words but from their behavior. The more time you spend in their presence, the more you'll see your values and priorities beginning to match up with theirs — with Islam and maximizing your full potential. If you want to reach perfection, be around those who have studied to be experts in it — true and pious ʿulamāʾ!

Our ʿulamāʾ want to spend time with us. The responsibility they have to the knowledge they acquired is to share this knowledge with others and to help them with it. A lot of us have questions about religion, things that make us uncomfortable, things we do not understand or wish were different, things we struggle with, and so on. Talking and spending time with ʿulamāʾ helps significantly in this area. They are happy to help and talk with you no matter who you are — age, country, religion, level of religiousness, etc. — so long as you are sincere.

ʿULAMĀʾ SPOTLIGHT: ʿALLĀMAH TABATABA'I

The late ʿAllāmah Al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i was born in Tabriz in 1904, and was from the lineage of great scholars. By the age of nine, both his mother and father passed away, making him an orphan. He complete some of his studies in Tabriz before moving to Najaf, Iraq, where the great ʿulamāʾ taught at that time. In 1934, he moved to Qom, Iran — which is now the city of knowledge, where he spent the remainder of time in this world, until he passed away in 1981.

ʿAllāmah Tabatabai's most renowned work is Tafsīr Al-Mizān, a 20 volume commentary on the Qurʾān, which is one of the greatest tafsīrs ever written. While others use their own thinking, ḥadīth, or even logic to provide commentary, his primary approach was to use the Qurʾān itself. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) said about the Qurʾān, "One part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the other." This method of tafsīr is known as *tafsīr Al-Qurʾān bil Qurʾān*.

ʿAllāmah Tabatabai wrote the tafsīr because there were not enough people in Ḥawzah studying the Qurʾān. "Despite the fact that at the time tafsīr of the Qurʾān...was not being addressed, it was not considered worthy of study…teaching tafsīr was considered having weak qualifications! However, I knew I could not use this as an excuse in front of God and I continued my studies until I completed the writing of Tafsīr Al-Mizān."

ʿAllāmah Tabataba'i is an example of someone who reached closeness (qurb) to Allah (swt), and was an inspiration for us to follow the same path. He understood the depths of the Qurʾān because he was close to the Qurʾān himself, and he acted on his knowledge. Āyatullāh Jawadi Amuli said about him, "ʿAllāmah Tabatabai's behavior was one that conformed completely to the Qurʾān. Perhaps it can be said that his behavior had *become* the Qurʾān. Every verse that God has placed in the Qurʾān describing a perfect human being, we found it in ʿAllāmah's behavior to the extent that it is possible to be seen in an individual..."

He had a deep respect for his wife, about whom he has said: "It was this woman who allowed me to reach this position. She has been my partner and whatever books I have written, half [of the credit] belongs to her." His daughter said that Allāmah did not like for anyone else to do personal tasks for him: "Even in the end when he was sick...he would get up from his place to pour his own tea despite his state of illness. And if I objected and said, "Why didn't you ask me to bring some tea,' he would reply, 'No, you are a guest, and you are also a descendant of the Prophet (ṣ) [since you are Sayyid], and I cannot give you any orders!'"

He observed this humility with his students as well. He often sat on the floor, without keeping his back against a wall, and insisted that others lead prayer. Āyatullāh Ibrahim Amini once said of him, "He used to teach his classes calmly and quietly, never raising his voice. He became familiar and made friends with others very quickly. He was so friendly with everyone, even a new student, that one might have thought they were two dear friends…"

This is only a glimpse at the life and teachings of ʿAllāmah Tabatabai, as one of his closest students, Shaheed Mutaharri, has said about him: "ʿAllāmah Tabatabai is an exemplar of men of worth and greatness. This man is so very remarkable and worthy that even after 100 years it will be necessary to sit and ponder and analyze his thoughts in order to fully understand his worth..." We should try to embody the example of ʿAllāmah Tabatabai, by practicing what we know about Islam, slowly building ourselves through doing what is wājib, staying away from what is ḥarām, and doing our responsibility towards others.

Worksheet 4.1a: Tafsir Qurʾān bil Qurʾān

Below, we will examine one of the first sections of Tafsīr Al-Mizān that examine the very first verse of the very first Sūrah (Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm).

"Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm"

(The Beneficent, the Merciful) are two adjectives derived from Ar-raḥmah (الرحمة = mercy).

When you see someone suffering from a deficiency which he cannot remove by himself, the reaction which you experience and which tells you to provide him with what he needs in order to make up for his deficiency, is called mercy.

Ultimately, mercy means giving and bestowing to fulfill another's need.

It is this latter meaning in which this attribute is used for Allah (swt).

- Ar-Raḥmãn is on a paradigm which is used for magnification and exaggeration.
- Ar-Raḥīm is a paradigm of Aṣ-Ṣifãtul Mushabbahah (perpetual adjective, inseparable attribute).

Therefore, Ar-Raḥmãn (translated here as “the Beneficent") relates to that All-Encompassing mercy that is bestowed upon the believers and the unbelievers alike.

It is used in the Qurʾãn, mostly in this meaning.

Allah (swt) says: “The Beneficent (God) is firm in power[1]”
“Ar-Rahīm” (translated here as “the Merciful”), on the other hand, is more appropriate for that mercy which shall remain forever, the perpetual inexhaustible mercy that shall be bestowed on the believers in the life hereafter.

Allah (swt) says: “...and He is Merciful to the believers”[2]
“Surely to them (i.e.,the believers) He is Compassionate, Merciful”[3]

1. That is why it is said that the mercy of “Ar-Rahmãn” is common for the believers and the unbelievers and that of “Ar-Rahīm” is reserved for the believers.

In the passage above, highlight where the method of doing tafsīr using other āyahs is most obvious to you.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ṭāhā, 20:5
2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aḥzāb, 33:43
3 *Noble Qurʾān,* At-Tawbah, 9:117

2. Compare and contrast the meaning of ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm that ʿAllāmah Tabatabai is describing.

3. Did this passage from Al-Mīzān help your understanding of the first verse in the first Sūrah? Describe why, or why not.

AKHLĀQ
(ETIQUETTE)

CHAPTER 1

Mind, Body and Soul

1.1 Practically Achieving Our Purpose

1.2 Balance and Moderation

1.3 Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

1.1 Practically Achieving Our Purpose

OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze the perspective of celebrities on their purpose of life
- Identify the purpose of life
- Identify the meaning of true happiness
- Compare and contrast the perspectives of celebrities to those of real role models

SUPPLEMENTAL VIDEO:

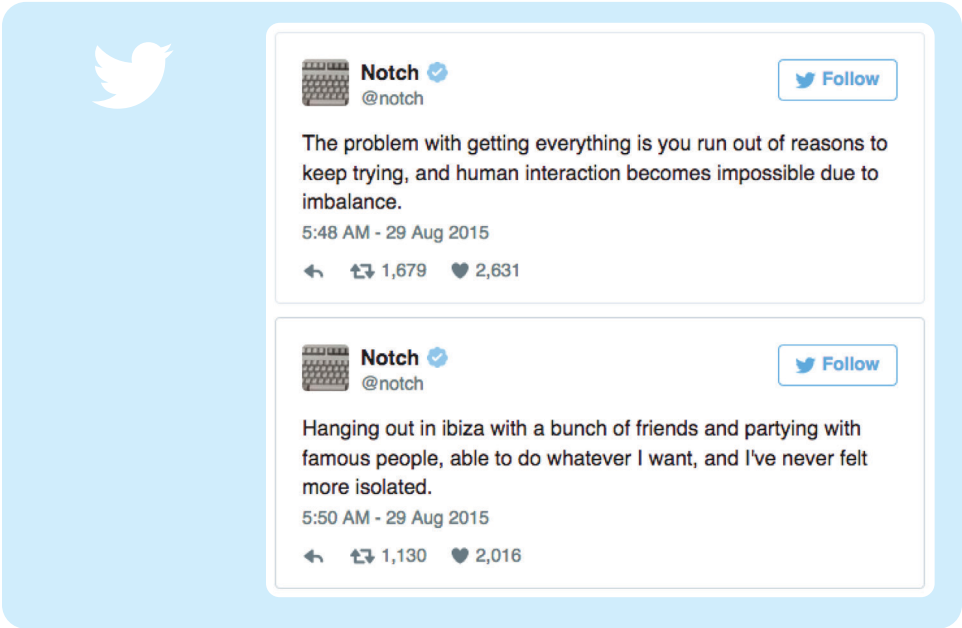
https://youtu.be/zYDKCx4hSQQ?t=81
(Start at 1:21; end at 3:47)

THINK ALOUD: Answer the following questions in pairs or as a class:

1. What do celebrities have that others don't have?
2. Do you think celebrities are typically satisfied with their lives?
3. Does what they have make them feel like they have achieved their full potential?

Typically, when celebrities talk about themselves, they admit that their celebrity success has not given them satisfaction in their lives, even though they have so much wealth and fame.

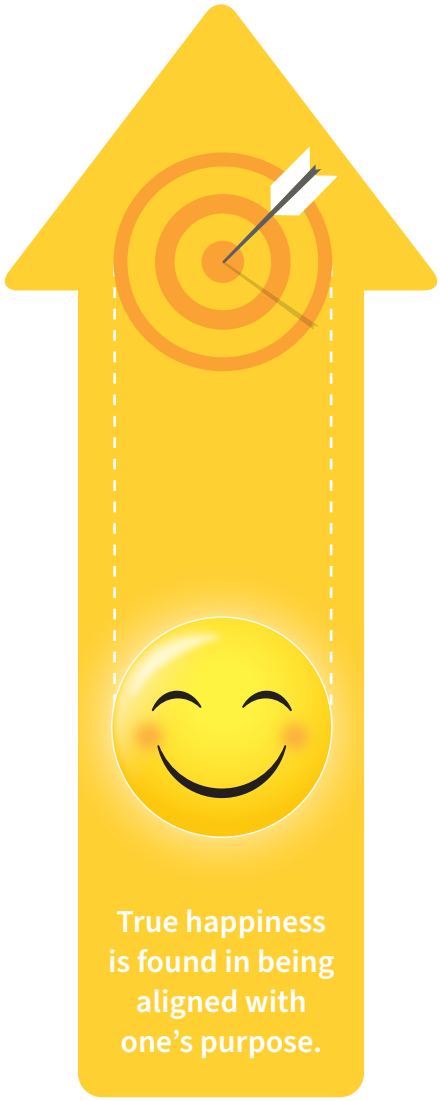
For example, in 2014, the founder of Minecraft purchased a 70 million dollar mansion in a neighborhood known as Billionaire's Row in California. It had a special wall just for candy, 14 bedrooms, 15 bathrooms, and a $5,600 toilet. The media reported that he sometimes spent $180,00 in one night on parties. At one point, despite having access to such wealth, he expressed his emotions on Twitter as follows:


Notch
@notch
Follow
The problem with getting everything is you run out of reasons to keep trying, and human interaction becomes impossible due to imbalance.
5:48 AM - 29 Aug 2015
1,679
2,631
Notch
@notch
Follow
Hanging out in ibiza with a bunch of friends and partying with famous people, able to do whatever I want, and I've never felt more isolated.
5:50 AM - 29 Aug 2015
1,130
2,016

When we look at the lives of celebrities, they tend to have almost everything imaginable in this world in a material sense. The founder of Minecraft was able to build his home with everything he could have desired. Once he accomplished having a house like this, he was still not happy. What else could he possibly need?

In reality, everything in this world is only temporary. He was trying to fulfill his infinite being with temporary happiness. He didn't realize he can only make his infinite being happy by pursuing that which is infinite — Allah (swt). He made his material possession, in this case his house, his goal in life, thinking it would bring him happiness.

Happiness as it is commonly understood as an emotional state relating to material possessions does not give us true happiness. True happiness is found in being aligned with one's purpose. Obtaining true happiness comes with working hard and facing the difficulties of living life. In the Qurʾān, the words saʿādah and falāḥ are used for true happiness and translate to success, prosperity, and happiness.



THINK ALOUD: In adhān and iqāmah we are called to run toward falāḥ—"Ḥayā ʿala al-falāḥ"—what do you think the connection between ṣalāh and falāḥ is?

Islam has taught us how to attain true happiness in our own lives. When Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) was asked about saʿādah, he replied, "A long life in obedience to Allah." Allah (swt) is the All-Knowing and All-Perfect Creator, and the path that He has given us, Islam, leads us to true happiness. Allah (swt) says in Sūrah Ṭāhā,

> Those who follow My guidance will not go wrong, nor will they be miserable. But whoever forgets about Me will have a wretched life…[1]

Even if the circumstances in our life are difficult or we have few material possessions, we can still feel happiness in knowing we are striving towards a higher purpose and potential, and that Allah (swt) is taking care of us. When we look at people whose goals for success are limited to this world, although they may get temporary happiness, they will never have true happiness in those goals.

Compare this to the lives of our Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa); even though they faced many difficulties, they were still happy knowing that they are on the path of Allah (swt).

WHO ARE THE REAL CELEBRITIES?

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Think... about these questions:
1. How do people become celebrities? What is this usually based off of?
2. Would it be fair if only celebrities could go to Heaven? Why or why not?

Pair... Turn to a partner to answer the following questions

Share... your answers with the class.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ṭāhā, 20:124

People often become celebrities based on their looks, voice, or talents. If being a celebrity was *the* ticket to success, we would say that's not just or fair. For example, if being a celebrity was the only way to get to Heaven, we would say this is injustice. If being rich and famous were truly where our success comes from, you could never be satisfied with your life if you were not a celebrity. We would ask, what about the people that don't have what it takes to become celebrities?

Islam teaches us that everyone can become a "celebrity" in a true sense of the word: when they achieve their God-given potential and are celebrated by Allah, the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), and the angels:

> It is He who blesses you — and so do His angels — that He may bring you out from darkness into light, and He is most merciful to the faithful.[2]

The Prophet (ṣ) said, "Verily Allah, the High, boasts about the worshipping young man to His angels, saying, 'Look at My servant! He has abandoned his desires for My sake.'"[3]

People who equate happiness to fame and fortune also find it difficult to go through hardships like sickness, aging, or loss of popularity. But no one is able to escape whatever Allah has decreed for them, even if they have money and fame. People who are truly on the path to their full potential have come to terms with the realities of this world. They can live much happier lives than some famous celebrities who base their lives on fake, unrealistic ideals.

SHAHĪD BEHESHTI

Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Beheshti

Oftentimes, we are bombarded with information about the lives of Hollywood celebrities and an image of who they are. We can look at the lives of the shuhadāʾ—those who lived and died in the way of Allah—to understand a different way of living. In order to become a shahīd—martyr—a person needs to be very close to Allah (swt).

THINK ALOUD: What kind of person is able to become a shahīd? Can you think of any examples?

One of the great shuhadāʾ of recent times is Shahīd Beheshti, a great leader and learned scholar who was killed in 1979.

He tried to seek knowledge, even at a young age. When he was just fourteen, he started studying theology in the Sadr Theology school of Isfahan. As a scholar, he would prepare thoroughly in order to be able to share his knowledge with others. He took advantage of every moment he could find to study and learn in order to be so thorough.

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aḥzāb, 33:43

3 *Kanz al-Ummāl*, Hadith. 43057

Once, he was invited to an academic conference where he was asked to prove that the Qurʾān, unlike the Bible and the Tawrāh, is the original revelation of Allah (swt) and has never been altered by human beings. As part of his thorough preparation for this conference, he read 82 books in English, not to mention other books and articles in other languages.

Another time, Shahīd Beheshti started a weekly discussion session with four university professors on the topic of economics. After a few months, the professors admitted that their knowledge about economics was shallow. Instead of discussing economics together like they were all peers, they wanted to become Shahīd Beheshti's students and to turn the discussion session into a class. Because of the attention that a true hawza student gives to subjects, Shahīd Beheshti knew it in a lot of depth, but the experts had not studied the subject in detail from its roots the way that Shahīd Beheshti had done.

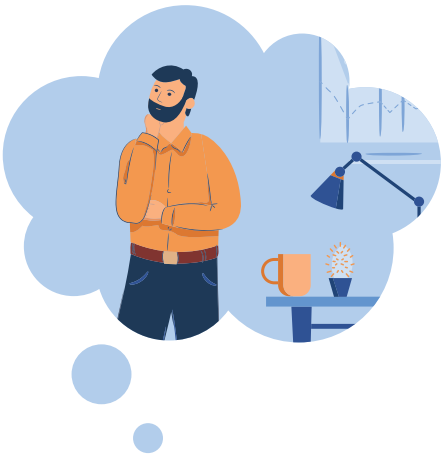
In an interview, Shahīd Beheshti's wife once said, "Despite my husband being very busy, it was not possible for him to arrive at a meeting later than the agreed upon time. He was very organized and punctual. He used to say, 'If we can't be organized about our day-to-day affairs, how can we possibly help the government to advance?'" He was also very kind to his family. His wife said that she didn't recall even a single incident where he became angry for no valid reason.

Shahīd Beheshti used to tell his students,

> "Don't say that 'If only I had that such-and-such I would do this thing'. Instead with whatever you have, ask yourself, 'What is the best thing I can do?'"

Shahīd Beheshti lived his life in a way that his actions were for the sake of Allah (swt). Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (a) has said, "Above every act of goodness is another act of goodness, until one were to be killed in the way of Allah (swt). When one is killed in the way of Allah (swt), the Magnificent and Exalted, there is no greater act than that." What is meant here is people who live sincere, pure lives of truth and are killed or die in this way.

REFLECTING ON OUR OWN LIVES



Through the resources we have been given by Allah (swt), we have access to all sorts of role models. When we look at the celebrities that are adored by people today, we can see that many of them lack true contentment. We can find Islamic role models throughout the ages who inspire us to be better people. The lives of Shuhadāʾ like Shahīd Beheshti, who strove for their ideals and the truth, and used whatever time and blessings Allah (swt) gave them in His way, help to give us a different perspective on what life is all about and who truly shines in the view of Allah (swt).

When it comes to our own lives, we also have to accept the reality of life in this world. We are tested in this life because it is the way that Allah (swt) has given us to grow and get closer to Him. Things will not always work out the way we expect them to, but this is a test from Allah (swt) and the ability to realize this is a blessing from Allah (swt). When we do things, we have to realize and perform our own taklīf, or responsibility, and have tawakkul, or trust, in Allah (swt).

When we do our responsibility and have tawakkul, we grow closer to Allah (swt). We should try to do this in every aspect of our lives. When we are in school for example, we may not always get the grades we are looking for, even if we try our best. We might get assigned group partners that don't do their work, or have a hard time finding the right set of friends. All of these are tests from Allah (swt), even when we may not realize it. Getting past this and realizing our ultimate goal and purpose is closeness to Allah (swt), is how we grow.

TAKLĪF: responsibility

TAWAKKUL: trust

Activity 1.1a: Achieving Our Goals (Part 1)

For this activity, we have listed some goals or purposes that people might be striving to achieve. Think of as many examples as you can of actions a person might take to reach that goal. Start with small steps and lead to bigger things. End with the most drastic actions.

GOAL	ACTIONS
Become the best at a video game	**Small:** Practice the video game every day **Medium:** **Drastic:** Quit school/work to become the best at the video game
Become the most famous person on Youtube	**Small:** **Medium:** Vlog everyday and pay $$ to promote your blogs **Drastic:**
Be seen as the most beautiful/ attractive and stay youthful	**Small:** Start wearing sunscreen and get good moisturizing cream **Medium:** **Drastic:**
Become a billionaire	**Small:** **Medium:** **Drastic:** Start a company that exploits people to get rich quick.

In the activity above, there is a clear relationship between the goals people have and the actions they are taking to achieve them. For example, if you are trying to be the best at a video game, it is obvious from your actions how much you are prioritizing that goal. If you practice it once in a while, there may be other parts of your life that you are prioritizing. If you are quitting school to become the best at the video game, you are prioritizing video games in your life. When we reflect on our own actions, we need to see what we are prioritizing.

Activity 1.1a: Achieving Our Goals (Part 2)

Using the chart below, write a schedule of your typical day (either a school day or the weekend.)

TIME	SCHEDULE

Activity 1.1b: Reflection

Reflect on your schedule above using the following questions.

1. Based on your schedule, what do you spend most of your time on?

2. What would you like to spend more time on?

Using the chart below, write a new schedule that you would like to start having.

TIME	SCHEDULE

1.2 Balance and Moderation

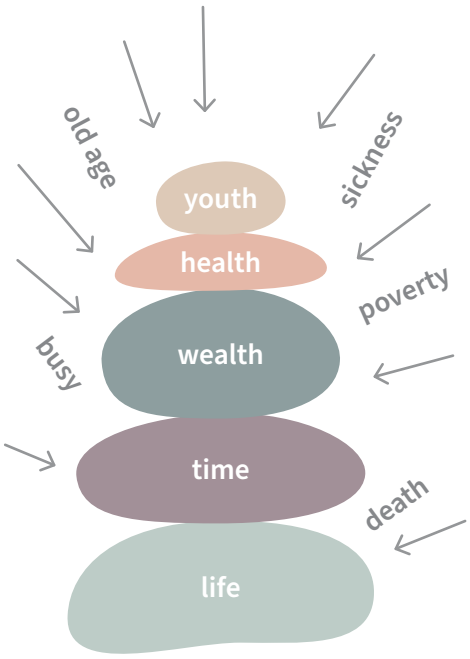
OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize that our body is an amānah—gift from Allah (swt)
- Determine the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, including diet, exercise, hygiene, and sleep
- Develop personal strategies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle

THINK ALOUD: Imagine someone gives you a nice shirt that you have been really wanting. What would you do? How would you take care of it?

Islam is a system which governs every aspect of our lives—personal, health, wealth, political, and economical. Taking care of our physical body is a responsibility Allah (swt) has given us; it is an amānah—a trust/gift. Similar to how we would take care of a valuable gift from someone, we should see the value in this blessing from Allah (swt) and take care of our physical body. This includes paying attention to our diet, exercise, daily routine, hygiene, and self-grooming. We may consider a lot of these things common sense, but sometimes, as our routine changes or we become busy, it is easy to forget to fulfill these.

STAYING BALANCED: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IN ISLAM



THINK ALOUD: Why is it easier for someone to establish good habits when they are young and healthy?

The Prophet (ṣ) gave advice to his close companion, Abū Dharr: "O Abū Dharr! Take advantage of five things before five things seize you; your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your spare time before you are busy, and your life before your death."

The importance of being healthy does not mean that people that are sick or elderly are not as close to Allah. Health is a gift from Allah, but both health and sickness can be a test. When we are young and healthy, sometimes we may not use our time wisely because we assume we can always be better "later".

THINK ALOUD: Have you ever met an elderly person that is very close to Allah (swt) and prays often? How do some elderly people worship Allah (swt) even when their health has declined with age?

It takes elderly people much more energy to do good deeds, but they often established the habit of doing good deeds from when they were young. The other parts of the ḥadīth are also important for us when we are thinking about living a balanced life. Sustenance comes from Allah (swt), and we do not know whether we will lose what we have tomorrow, so we should spend what money we have wisely in the way of Allah (swt) instead of squandering it in other ways.

When it comes to how we divide up our day, our spare time provides us with an opportunity to seek ḥalāl entertainment that can help motivate us during the rest of the day.

The last part of this ḥadīth emphasizes that we should take advantage of our life before our death, by working on all of these things.

HAVING A HEALTHY BALANCE

Islām is a perfect code of life, and so it naturally gives us guidelines on how we should eat, drink, exercise, and even sleep.

ETIQUETTES OF EATING AND DRINKING

One verse of the Qurʾān that provides a general guideline for eating is this:

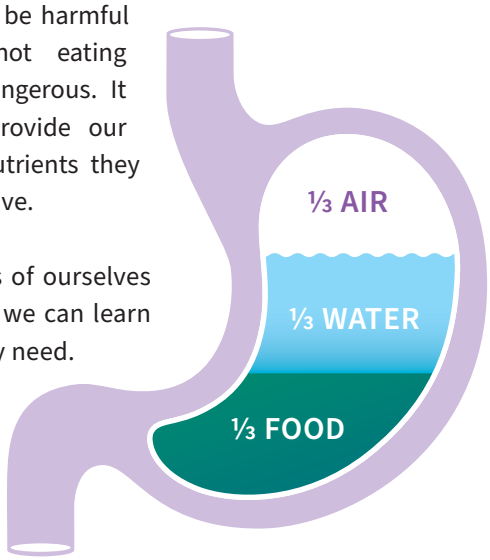
كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا

Eat and drink, but do not go to the excess.[1]

In terms of our physical health, it is good to eat a variety of food. This includes fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, lentils, beans, etc. This means having a balanced diet: even too many vegetables can be a bad thing if we do not eat anything else!

We should also be moderate when it comes to *how much* we eat. Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said, "When you eat, leave a third of your stomach for food, a third for drink, and a third for air." Just like overeating can be harmful to our health, not eating enough can be dangerous. It is important to provide our bodies with the nutrients they need in order to thrive.

By being conscious of ourselves every time we eat, we can learn how much we really need.



THINK ALOUD: Have you noticed when you do not eat properly (by overeating, or undereating, or not eating the right type of food) it might affect your mood and your performance?

Food should give us energy and motivation. If food is keeping us from doing ʿibādah or other wājib acts or our responsibilities, then we need to revisit our eating habits. We should also always make sure that the food we eat is ḥalāl so that it's good for the body and soul. Just like the best car needs the best gasoline, our bodies need the best fuel and food.

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ

So let man observe his food [2]

The word "ṭaʿām" (food) in this ayah can be understood at different levels.

When we look into the tafsīr of this ayah, we learn that in addition to the physical food that we consume, we should also be aware of our spiritual consumption, like the knowledge we receive.

In an upcoming lesson on media, we will discuss how **consumption** can include the knowledge, learning, and even media we are exposed to on a daily basis. The idea of being aware of what we are consuming includes avoiding occupying our mind with unnecessary information that can prevent us from thinking clearly. Being selective about what we do during the day is just as important a part of our "observation of food" as the āyah indicates as our physical intake is.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Aʿrāf, 7:31

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* ʿAbasa, 80:24

EXERCISE

Islām also highly recommends exercise and staying active. Our Imāms emphasized staying physically active and not being lazy. Many of the great scholars would try to take daily walks and engage in other forms of exercise despite their busy schedules. Āyatullāh Khamenei regularly goes mountain climbing.

> Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said that, "A mʾumin who is physically strong is better than a mʾumin who is physically weak."

Of course, this speaks to all of our natural abilities, and we should try to be as strong as our bodies and abilities allow us to be so that we may serve Allah (swt) in the best ways.

Regular exercise and keeping our bodies physically fit can help us develop self-discipline and even bring us closer to Allah (swt) when done with this intention. The Prophet (ṣ) encouraged his companions to participate in sports such as archery, horse riding, swimming, and wrestling.

When we make time to exercise or remain physically active, we should remember it should not involve ḥarām activities such as seeing people of the other gender in inappropriate clothing, or delaying our wājibāt. It should also be in a balanced way, for the sake of Allah (swt) and not for the sake of showing off to others.

Imām Ḥasan Al-Mujtabā (ʿa): "I am surprised at the person who thinks about what he eats (he makes sure that whatever goes into his stomach is wholesome and healthy), how does such a person not think about what goes into his head (the knowledge which he takes in)! He ensures that no harmful foods enter his stomach; however, his chest (mind) becomes the rendezvous point of deviated, base teachings!"

The faith of Islam strongly promotes a "healthy lifestyle"; however, it does not make a "healthy body" the ultimate goal in life. We should remember that exercise and fitness is a way of gaining proximity to Allah (swt), and treat it as such.

HYGIENE AND SELF-GROOMING

Another important aspect of a muʾmin's life is their cleanliness, in their personal life and in their social life.

Personal cleanliness includes paying attention to the rules of najāsah and ensuring we clean ourselves after using the bathroom. It also includes paying attention to self-grooming (cutting our nails, our hair, and combing for example) and being neat and presentable especially when we meet other people.

Our appearance and how we dress is also an important part of cleanliness in our social life. The Prophet (ṣ) would take regular baths, apply perfume, and look in the mirror before meeting fellow believers to make sure his hair and face appeared well-groomed. He would cut his nails and wash his face regularly, more so than people usually did at that time, to the surprise of the early Muslims. The Prophet (ṣ) would also wear musk (a type of cologne used at the time) and people would recognize him by his distinctive perfume.

While we should not be occupied or judge anyone only by their appearance, it is important that we remember Allah (swt) wants us to remain neat and clean to maintain our health and not offend anyone else. For example, if we participate in a group exercise class, we should remember to take a shower afterwards and take appropriate measures to maintain good body odor.

SLEEP AND WELL-BEING

Another important and often a neglected aspect of taking care of our bodies is the amount of sleep we get. We should try not to sleep too little or too much, as Islam includes moderation.

Scheduling our sleep each day and having a regular bedtime can also help us offer the Fajr prayer on time for example, and it is generally encouraged to schedule our day accordingly. People who schedule their sleep also tend to have more energy at the times it is needed, since they can schedule it that way. Sometimes, schoolwork or socializing can get in the way of our sleep, but it is especially important for teenagers who are growing everyday to get a regular amount of sleep every night.

If you are having trouble sleeping, one of the best things to do is to become conscious of your daily consumption. Our consumption (both physical and spiritual) can have a huge effect on how calm we are when we try to sleep, and it is especially important to try and regulate our consumption closer to the time we regularly sleep.

KEEPING THE RIGHT INTENTIONS

Overall, Islam has provided guidelines for how to keep our bodies fit and how to fulfil our responsibilities towards our physical selves to better ensure that we are able to grow spiritually. Being healthy makes us feel good, but we should be careful not to make "feeling good" our sole purpose in life. If there is some popular advice or trend for physical health that goes against Islam, we should avoid doing it. Regular exercise and a balanced diet are very important but we should avoid being overly preoccupied with them. Sometimes, it might even be more important to stay awake than follow our sleep schedule, like on Laylatul Qadr. As we are trying to live a healthy lifestyle, we should make our choices for the sake of Allah (swt) and as a means of getting closer to Him.

Activity 1.2a: My Strategies for Being Balanced

Directions: Answer the questions below for implementing strategies for living a balanced lifestyle.

1. What kinds of healthy foods do you like to eat that you could try having more often?

2. What kind of unhealthy foods would you like to eat less of?

3. What kind of exercise would you like to try doing more regularly?

4. Is there anything you feel you need to help in improving your hygiene (ex: getting a new nail cutter)?

5. What are some strategies you want to implement for sleeping better?

Activity 1.2b: Review Questions

1. Our physical body is an *amānah* from Allah (swt)—a _____ .

   a. job
   b. trust/gift
   c. burden

2. According to the advice from the Prophet (ṣ) to Abū Dharr, what are the five things we need to take advantage of before five things seize you? *(Circle all that apply)*

   a. youth
   b. beauty
   c. time
   d. health
   e. education
   f. wealth
   g. good food
   h. weather
   i. life

3. How does Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) advise moderation in how much we eat?

   a. a half of your stomach for food, a fourth for drink, and a fourth for air
   b. a fourth of your stomach for food, a half for drink, and a fourth for air
   c. a third of your stomach for food, a third for drink, and a third for air

4. We should be aware of the physical food that we consume as well as our _____ consumption, like the knowledge we receive.

   a. spiritual
   b. liquid
   c. sweet

5. With the right intention, exercise can be a way of gaining _____ to Allah (swt).

   a. likes
   b. strength
   c. beauty
   d. proximity

1.3 Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

OBJECTIVES:

- Review the meaning of true happiness and identify how our faith impacts our view of trials and difficulties
- Understand the difference between self-esteem and self-confidence
- Develop strategies to understand how low self-esteem contributes to stress and anxiety
- Identify holistic strategies that can help in coping with stress and anxiety

TRUE HAPPINESS

THINK ALOUD: Is it possible to be happy all the time? Why or why not?

In previous lessons, we talked about the perspective in Islam on true happiness. We know that our purpose in life is to get closer to Allah (swt) by doing our taklīf, or responsibility, in every situation. When we get closer to Allah (swt) and try to achieve His satisfaction, we are achieving true happiness. True happiness is found in being aligned with one's purpose. Obtaining true happiness comes with working hard and facing the difficulties of living life. In the Qurʾān, the words saʿādah and falāḥ are used for true happiness and translate to success, prosperity, and happiness.

The typical Western perspective of happiness promotes an unrealistic expectation that we should *always* feel happy, and there's something wrong if we're not happy. In reality, it is perfectly normal to have ups and downs in life. We might not see that others are having problems in their lives because they may not tell us about them, but everyone faces difficulties in this world.

Allah (swt) says in Sūrah ʿAnkabūt:

> Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say, 'We have faith,' and they will not be tested? Certainly We tested those who were before them. So Allah shall surely ascertain those who are truthful, and He shall surely ascertain the liars.[1]

From this we see that when we claim to have faith in Allah (swt), He will present us with trials and challenges. Yet, when we are faced with these trials, it is sometimes difficult for us to remember that this is a way that Allah (swt) is bringing us closer to Him.

THINK ALOUD: Does social media give us a realistic expectation of people's lives? Why or why not? What are some examples you have seen that are not realistic?

When we see people post on social media, they usually only post the best parts of their lives. We might not feel like this has an effect on how we view our own lives, but over time we might notice that we expect our own lives to look a certain way.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-ʿAnkabūt, 29:2-3

We might want to dress in different ways or want to do certain things because we see others posting all the time.

People that post on social media sometimes spend a lot of time editing their posts to look nicer. Even a picture of coffee can be made to look better than it ever would in real life! It is important for us to be realistic and reflect on whether seeing these things as often as we do helps us or makes us have these desires because of social media.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

THINK ALOUD: What do you think is the difference between these two terms?

Self-confidence means to have confidence in being able to accomplish certain tasks and goals. For example, a math teacher might be confident in their ability to do and teach multiplication.

For example, an experienced dental surgeon will be confident in their ability to perform teeth extraction. We would not call this surgeon arrogant, because they have done their training and know what they are doing. But the same surgeon may not be confident of their ability to fly a plane, or to fix a plumbing issue, because they don't have the necessary training.

Now, imagine the dental surgeon is too confident in their ability and attempts a very complicated case. They will most likely make a mistake, and we would not call them a good dental surgeon. We would have more respect for them if they realized that they needed a second opinion. Part of being realistic is knowing your own limits.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

What do you think are the characteristics of someone who is overly confident in themselves? How would you help them to become more balanced?

It is not necessary to feel self-confident about everything, because none of us are masters of everything. However, it is important to have a realistic understanding of one's strengths and abilities, and to be confident with regards to what we can do.

SELF-CONFIDENCE: to have confidence in being able to accomplish certain tasks and goals

THINK ALOUD: What would be the problem if the dental surgeon knew how to do a tooth extraction, but was never confident in their ability to do it? What would you say if they told you they were not confident and were about to do a tooth extraction for you?

If the surgeon was too afraid to try surgery, they would never do a tooth extraction properly. We would not want them to do it, and it would not be good for them to let this get in the way of doing something they know how to do that can benefit others.

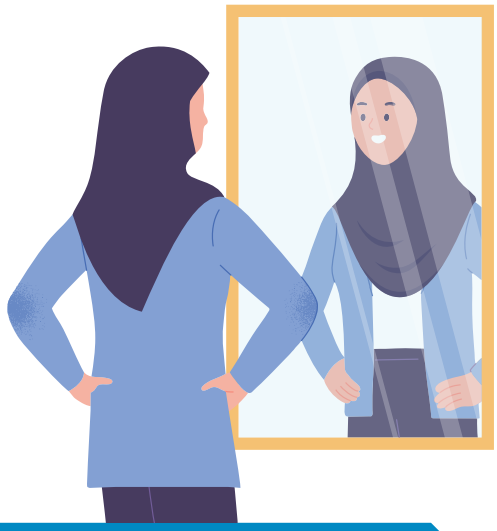
THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Imagine that you have a friend who lacks confidence in doing something that they are actually good at. After talking to them, you realize that the reasons for the lack of confidence are:

1. They are self-conscious
2. They failed in doing something it the past, and they are scared about failing again
3. They don't think they are good at that thing, even though they actually are

How can you help them regain their confidence?

SELF-ESTEEM



Self-esteem is the overall sense we have of how much worth and value we have.

Islam teaches us that self-esteem is extremely important — as long as it stems from a correct and balanced perspective. Allah (swt) has created us as his khalīfah (representative) on Earth, and we have the potential to be the most God-like of any of His creatures.

We can honor this blessing and responsibility, by acknowledging and then striving to be the best of creation. However, the root of some spiritual diseases is from imagining we are independent of Allah (swt).

One of the most severe spiritual ills that human beings can face is that of takabbur, or arrogance, where we see ourselves as independently possessing greatness and worth over others. Takabbur was one of the causes of the downfall of Iblīs, and we are warned to eradicate it from our hearts or else we will follow the path of Iblīs.

People can be one extreme or another when it comes to self-confidence and self-esteem. Some people have excessive self-obsession, which is called (narcissism). The culture of social media can promote narcissism by making it easy to be obsessed with one's own looks, opinions, and perception in the eyes of others.

An equally dangerous spiritual disease (which is often not given as much attention) is that of lack of self-esteem. Islam teaches us that both extremes are condemnable, and encourages us to have a real perspective on things.

In our lives, we must have a real perspective on our own abilities and ourselves. What does this real perspective mean? We have to try to look at ourselves without thinking that we are better or worse than we actually are. There will always be internal or external factors that try to bring us down or build us up too high. For example, you might notice that people in school or on social media try to make what you are doing seem like it is not good enough.

This might happen especially if we are around non-Muslims, in school or on social media. We have to remember to only take advice from people who truly care about us, want to help us, and are strong in their imān, or faith.

Sometimes the people who are surrounding us might think it is funny to try to bring us down, but in these times, it is important for us to remain confident, especially when it comes to our beliefs.

We should always remember that Allah (swt) created us to be His representatives on earth and made us dignified and honored over the rest of His creation. Without comparing ourselves to others, we should feel honored because of the great esteem that Allah (swt) gives us.

SELF-ESTEEM: the overall sense we have of how much worth and value we have

KHALĪFAH: representative

TAKABBUR: arrogance

IMĀN: faith

STRESS AND ANXIETY

When we are faced with difficulties, sometimes we might fall into low self-esteem. For example, if we did not do well on an exam, or people treat us unkindly, sometimes we might fall into feeling bad about ourselves. Similarly, if we make a mistake we might start to dwell on this mistake for a long time.

It is okay and natural to feel stress if we are facing difficulty, but having prolonged periods of stress can lead to anxiety and/or depression. This can cause us to feel down about ourselves often, or have negative thoughts where we might overthink something bad that has happened. This can also cause us to start feeling exhausted, because long periods of stress have an effect on our bodies.

If we find that we have stress or anxiety and low self-esteem, we should try to work on this over time. This cannot happen overnight, and we might catch that it still happens in difficult situations. It is, again, important for us to have a realistic perspective of ourselves. Sometimes, it might help to talk to someone that we trust that has more knowledge than us if we feel that we have low self-esteem, like a parent, trusted scholar, or counselor. As we work on having a real perspective of ourselves, we may still have negative thoughts about ourselves, but if we try to have this real perspective, inshāAllah these will become less and less over time.

STRATEGIES FOR GAINING A REAL PERSPECTIVE

Have a Schedule: It is important for us to have realistic expectations for ourselves and what we want to accomplish each day. Sometimes, when we think badly of ourselves, we are misdiagnosing the problem. For example, if you keep forgetting to exercise and now feel bad about it, an unconstructive way to react is to believe you are lazy. When you are not able to do a task, first ask yourself if you are scheduling your day properly, and realize that this is the problem that needs to be worked on.

REFLECT EVERY DAY

Before we sleep, we should reflect on our actions that we did that day. Then, we should make an intention that the next day, we will do better inshāʾallah. Make sure to try and identify the real causes for your problems, and over time, ask Allah (swt) to help you in getting closer to Him.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

Our physical, mental, and spiritual health are all connected. If we are not sleeping or eating properly, we will not have the energy to do our ʿibadāt, and may also become more irritable and/or pessimistic. It is important to keep a balance in our lives, and strengthen ourselves for the sake of Allah (swt).

READ QURʾĀN

The Qurʾān was sent down to us as a guide for how to lead our lives. Reading Qurʾān consistently every day will help us gain a real perspective and ground us.

REFLECT ON THE AHL AL-BAYT (ʿA)

When we reflect on the lives on the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), it will help us to keep our lives in perspective. We can connect with any of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), but the mourning of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) is a special blessing we have been given to elevate ourselves through reflection.

INCREASE GRATITUDE

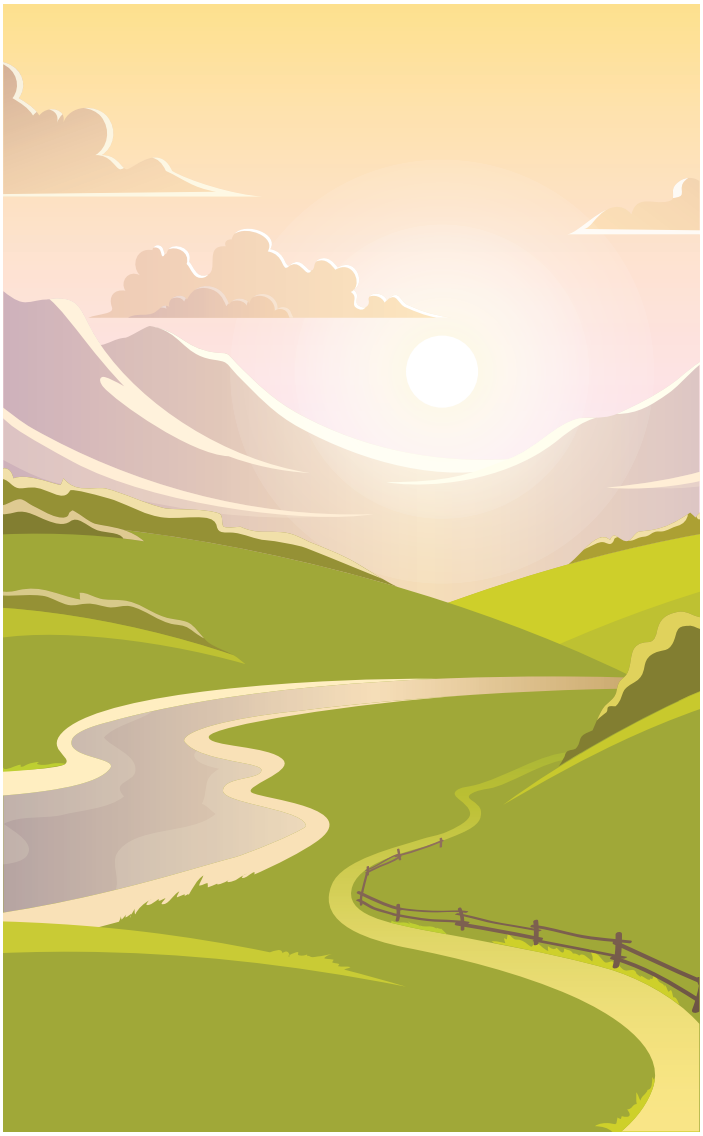
When we feel low self-esteem, we can forget a lot of our good qualities that have been given to us by Allah (swt). Likewise, when we are overconfident, it is because we have started to forget that Allah (swt) is the One who has given us everything. When we thank Allah (swt) we remember to be grateful for what He has given us, and appreciate our good qualities as blessings from Him.

CONCLUSION

Allah (swt) has given us many examples of people turning towards Him after they have made mistakes, both in the Qurʾān and through stories of the companions of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). We know the story of Hadhrat Ḥurr (ʿa) and how he was able to change his life around and become one of the close companions of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa). As we try to work on having a real perspective on ourselves, remember that sincere tawbah, turning towards Allah (swt), and asking for forgiveness sincerely can bring us back on the path moving towards Him inshāʿallah.

If we work on ourselves everyday using the strategies listed above, inshāʿallah, we can slowly improve ourselves over time. As we reflect on ourselves, we may find that we have too much confidence in some aspects of our lives and too little confidence in others. We may act as if we think of ourselves as better than others, but inside of ourselves we actually are weak and lack self-esteem because we don't see ourselves connected to the Source of all perfection, Allah (swt).

We may need external help from qualified experts that have training with issues we face, and we should not let this impact our self-confidence or self-esteem. It is important when working on ourselves to remember that we are meant to improve ourselves throughout our entire lives, which is how we grow closer to Allah (swt).



Activity 1.3a: Scenarios

Directions: Individually or with a partner, write what advice you would give to the person in each example on how to gain a real perspective.

1. Adam has been trying to exercise regularly, but every day this week that he has tried to, he has not done it. Adam wants to give up because he thinks of himself as lazy, and starts feeling bad about himself.

2. Zahra recently started at a new school and does not know anyone around her. She tries to speak to the other students, but has not had much luck as the other students know each other already. She begins to feel bad about herself, although she has been kind to the other students.

3. Jawad is supposed to stay for after-school tutoring for an upcoming test because his last scores were lower than what he was hoping for, but instead decides to go to his friend's house without studying much. He doesn't do well on the test.

Activity 1.3b:
My Strategies for Maintaining a Real Perspective

Directions: Fill out the reflection questions below. You will not be required to share your answers.

1. What are some strategies mentioned in the lesson that you can use in your own life for gaining and maintaining a real perspective of yourself?

2. What situations cause you to have low-self esteem? What do you sometimes feel low self-esteem about?

   a. Which of these situations might be caused by scheduling problems or other things that can be fixed?

   b. What should you be grateful for in the moments you have low self-esteem in these situations?

   c. Which of these situations can you improve by asking for forgiveness and trying to fix your mistakes?

3. What are some situations where you might feel overconfident?

   a. What should you be grateful for in the moments you have low self-confidence in these situations?

   b. Which of these situations can you improve by asking for forgiveness and trying to fix your mistakes?

CHAPTER 2

Spiritual Diseases

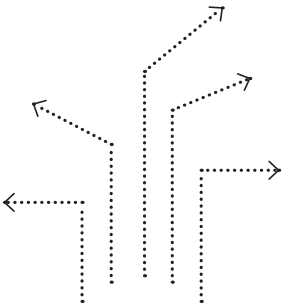
2.1 Anger and Forbearance

2.2 Greed vs. Contentment

2.1 Anger and Forbearance

OBJECTIVES:

- Define ghaḍab
- Identify how good and bad anger stem from ghaḍab
- Recognize the consequences of deficient anger including cowardice, displaced fear, and/or lack of dignity
- Recognize how excessive anger can lead to hastiness and recklessness
- Identify what steps to take to extinguish anger
- Develop personal strategies for managing anger



FIṬRAH: our inner nature and programming

CHANNELING OUR ANGER

THINK ALOUD: Is anger always bad? Why or why not?

Anger is often framed as an evil trait that we should try to completely rid ourselves of. In reality, anger stems from a power within our soul known as **ghaḍab**. Ghaḍab is responsible for many good things that human beings do, such as showing courage in times of fear, defending the innocent in times of attack, and even being competitive in a healthy manner. Ghaḍab stems from our **fiṭrah** (our inner nature and programming). As we have learned, our fiṭrah is pure — so everything it contains must have a purpose, even anger. What matters is how we direct our anger, and whether what we are angry about is for the sake of Allah (swt).

Everything, including emotions, has a distinct purpose. If we use a tool for its purpose, it will be beneficial — if we use it out of place and for the wrong purpose, it will be extremely detrimental. Take an example of a knife. A knife is a useful tool that enables you to cut fruits and vegetables. However, if not careful with the knife you can accidentally injure yourself or others. In this example, a knife is beneficial under careful and controlled use.

Your anger can be beneficial if you use it to stop injustice. If you are able to stop yourself from acting recklessly when angry, then your anger (and your mastery over it) helps develop you into a better human being. Hence the key to self development is channeling your anger properly and in the correct circumstances.

DEFICIENT ANGER

THINK ALOUD: Imagine if Allah had not given us the ability to feel anger. How would we react when we saw someone bullied in front of us?

If we did not have anger, we would not feel repulsed when we see something wrong or someone hurting others. This can lead to cowardice when there are instances that require action. When we see oppression in the world, for example, we should feel anger towards oppressors even if we are not able to do anything about it physically. We should do duʿā that people are relieved of hardships and for the return of our Imām (ʿaj).

Having deficient anger can cause us to have many different problems, such as laziness, cowardice, displaced fear, and love of comfort.

The common factor in all of these is not feeling repulsion towards what we should be repulsed by. If we were never strongly opposed and repelled by sins or things that Allah tells us to stay away from, we will not be moved in the other direction. We may feel too comfortable in what is happening around us and try to ignore what is bad.

Deficient anger can also lead to displaced fear. For example, we might fear things that should not cause us fear. We might fear that something bad will happen without reason, fear of dead bodies, or the dark. We might have an excessive fear of death to the point where we don't want to even think about it, which prevents us from preparing for it properly. We might always be anxious and worried about things we should be confident about.

Having a deficiency in anger can also lead us to lack a sense of dignity. This is especially a problem because as believers, we should have a sense of dignity for ourselves. For example, if we are in a group of people who choose to have different values and practices, we should have a sense of dignity and not feel like we need to act or dress the way they do if it is not in line with Islam.

In order to avoid deficiency in anger, we can try regularly participate in jum'āh prayers where the Imam reminds us about current affairs, remember the tragedy of Ashura and the mission of the Imām of our time (ʿaj) to bring worldwide justice, and remember the oppressed in our duʿās (try to pray for them every day!). These, along with being aware of what is happening in the world and reflecting on our own actions, should help us become more balanced.

EXCESSIVE ANGER

THINK ALOUD: How does a person act when they are too angry? What do they do? What are some of the dangers of being too angry?

Sometimes we can channel our anger in harmful ways. This happens when our anger comes from pure emotion and no reason, and when we act upon it by taking destructive actions. This not only ruins our relationships with others, but also prevents us from reaching our purpose: nearness to Allah.

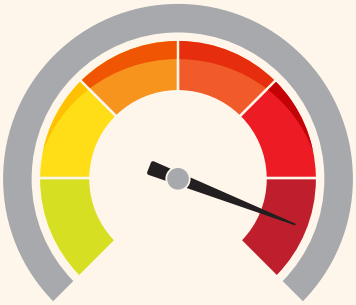
One of the examples we see of this happens in sports. Sometimes when someone gets angry in a game, it seems like they lose all control. Another time when this happens is when people don't like what they're being told.

Excessive anger can lead us to have hastiness, and behave recklessly, despite warnings of reason and religion. When someone is excessively angry, they might say harsh words, or raise their voice. Reflect on how you act when you are angry. Have you felt regret later for how you acted or the words you said? There are even common phrases for reckless anger, like "road rage", which is reckless driving because someone becomes angry.

GHAḌAB: the power to react with strength when needed. If not controlled, it can lead to excessive anger

GHAḌAB-O-METER

laziness
cowardice
displaced fear
love of comfort



recklessness
self-conceit
arrogance
hastiness

THINK ALOUD: What could be the consequences of road rage? Why is it that people don't consider the consequences while they have road rage?

Excessive anger is often a sign of arrogance and self-conceit, and when it goes unchecked it can result in these qualities becoming entrenched in an even deeper manner.

BOTTLING OUR ANGER

THINK ALOUD: What happens when we shake a carbonated drink and then open the cap? What if you did this with water?

Bottling our anger can be a lot like this analogy:

When someone gets angry and explodes, it's like how when there is a carbonated beverage bottle that is shaken up and then its top is taken off. The liquid doesn't just come out — it shoots out and usually causes damage and a mess, just like someone who releases their anger without control usually causes damage far and wide.

TAQWĀ:
God-consciousness

Our "cap" for anger is our **taqwā** — God-consciousness. Taqwā determines if, and when, anger needs to be released, and when it is released it is done in a careful way. When we are thinking about our purpose — getting closer to Allah (swt) — while doing our actions, we will be able to channel and control our anger inshāʾAllāh.

STRATEGIES FOR CONTROLLING ANGER

Exinguishing Negative Anger

It is good to try to extinguish your negative anger when it is first occurring. Here is some advice for how to extinguish anger right away:

1. Change your position	We have ḥadīth that tells us to change our position if we are angry, for example, if we are standing, we should sit down, if we are sitting, we should take a walk. We can also do breathing exercises to try to calm ourselves and slow our heart rate.
2. Wuḍūʾ or ghusl	Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said, "...Therefore, if one of you finds some of this (anger) in himself, if he is standing he should sit, and if he was sitting he should lay down. If he is still angry, he should perform wuḍūʾ with cold water or bath, for fire can only be extinguished with water." If you already have wuḍūʾ, you can do it again with the intention of "nūr ʿālā An-nūr", light upon light.

Preventing Repeated Anger

To prevent becoming angry repeatedly, we can reflect on our actions each night before we sleep and try to figure out the patterns for why we are feeling angry. Here are some things we can reflect on:

1. Recognize when it's something else	Sometimes we are angry because we are hungry or tired and become irritable. Eating in an unhealthy way (like consuming a lot of junk food, and not eating wholesome meals) can also be a cause of unbalanced emotions. Try to recognize when this happens and prevent the situation from happening again. Ask yourself when you're angry: Am I really this angry about what happened, or am I hungry, in need of more nutritious food, tired, or upset about something else?
2. Reflect on the situation	When things happen to us or we make a mistake, we should reflect on what happened instead of becoming angry about it. A simple example is being angry over losing a game or getting a bad grade, or upset someone broke your belongings.
3. Communicate	When someone else makes us angry, we should make sure to be clear about what we think happened and talk to them calmly. Never assume someone has the same understanding of a situation that you do. Realize that conflict is inevitable. The nature of this world is that there are times that people will disagree. Everyone will not agree with each other, and everyone will not agree with you. What's important is that for you to align what you do with what Allah (swt) wants from you and then to leave the rest to Him.
4. Pray for others	Sometimes, we do not have the opportunity to talk to someone about how we were upset by something they did, or even after talking to them, they still do not understand our intentions. We should pray for these people, so that we can soften our hearts towards them.
5. Do our Taklīf	When we do our responsibilities, like doing what is wājib, staying away from what is ḥarām, and being kind to others, we will strengthen our will power and control. This way, when we are tested with things that may make us angry, we do not act recklessly or hurt others.
6. Do the right thing	When you are in a difficult situation, brace yourself, and muster courage to do something that you know you should but normally you are afraid to do. For example, if you are scared of taking out the trash, the only way of overcoming this fear is to actually do it.
7. Read Qurʾān	Reading and reflecting on the Qurʾān and putting into practice what we know helps us to develop fear of depriving ourselves of Allah's (swt) special mercy, and this can help us think before we act and control our anger better.
8. Do Dhikr	Being in constant remembrance of Allah (swt) will help us stop and remember Him when we are overwhelmed with emotions.
9. Be Patient	Sometimes, even if we communicate, other people may not act the way we'd like them to. Be patient and forbearant with others, especially if they are your parents or family or close Muslims. We should remember that Allah (swt) has created people with free will, and everyone has their own challenges. One of the best ways of growing stronger is to learn how to bear other people's annoying behavior.

Activity 2.1: My Strategies for Anger

1. We talked about good ghaḍab, which can include making duʾā for the oppressed and helping those in need when we can. What are some ways you want to work on incorporating good ghaḍab in your life?

2. What do you usually become angry about that you want to work on?

3. What strategies do you plan to use in each of the situations you listed above to keep from being angry?

4. For the next week, write down when you became angry and how you handled your anger. Then, try to find the root reasons of why you are angry. You will not be sharing this with others.

SUN	
MON	
TUE	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	

5. **End of the Week Reflection:** How did your strategies help? How can you improve on them in the future?

2.2 Greed vs. Contentment

OBJECTIVES:

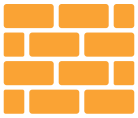
- Define ḥirs
- Identify the difference between good ḥirs and bad ḥirs
- Recognize the consequences of bad ḥirs
- Explain how to rid ourselves of bad ḥirs
- Develop personal strategies for managing greed

GHAFLAH: heedlessness

ḤIRṢ: the Arabic term for greed; an intense desire for something

knowledge

worship



self-building

good deeds

THINK ALOUD: What are some things people are greedy about? What are some of the problems that can come with being greedy? Is it possible to have too much of a good thing?

One day, Hārūn Rashīd — the ʿAbbāsid khalīfah — commanded his men to look for an old man who met the Prophet (ṣ) and could narrate a hadīth from him. His men looked far and wide and finally found an old man who claimed he had seen the Prophet and could narrate from him. In Hārūn's court, the old man shared the following ḥadith from Rasūlullāh (ṣ): "The children of Ādam (ʿa) will grow old, but will always possess two characteristics as though they are still young: greed and far-fetched wishes."

When the man was done sharing the ḥadīth, Hārūn gave him a gift, after which the old man asked him, "Is this gift only for this year or will you give me a gift every year?"

Hārūn laughed and responded, "Indeed, the Prophet (ṣ) spoke the truth!"

The above story demonstrates a common trait that is common in humans: greed. The Arabic term for greed is **ḥirṣ**. Ḥirṣ is an intense desire for something which often makes us work hard and put extra effort to attain it. We are born with an innate desire to want more and more. As humans, we have been created with a desire for the infinite unlimited.

We want unlimited wealth, unlimited success, unlimited knowledge. Yet, only Allah (swt) is truly unlimited. When we try to find what is infinite in things other than Allah (swt), we will never be satisfied with things in this world. Good ḥirs, or eagerness, is when we want to become better for the sake of Allah (swt) and want more of those things which lead us to Him.

GOOD ḤIRṢ

Good ḥirṣ refers to wanting something that serves our ultimate purpose. It is eagerness or desire for things, not for the sake of this world but rather the next world. For example, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was eager for knowledge, worship, self-building, and good deeds. This kind of ḥirṣ allows for self-improvement.

One example of good ḥirṣ can be seen in a story of the famous scholar Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyah ar-Rāzī. While on his deathbed, he was visited by a friend named ʿAlī bin Mahziyār. Muḥammad bin Zakariyyah asked ibn Mahziyār a question for knowledge, and ibn Mahziyār was shocked. He asked, "Why are you asking me this question at such a critical point in life when you are so close to death?"

Muḥammad bin Zakariyyah replied, "It is better to die with knowledge of the answer than to die without knowing." His thirst for knowledge was so strong that he was eager for knowledge even on his deathbed.

BAD ḤIRṢ

The bad kind of ḥirṣ presents itself in a few different forms, such as being greedy for things that are ḥarām, unattainable, or not beneficial for us in relation to our purpose. For example, someone may want more wealth, and spend all their time trying to attain more and more wealth. A person may become greedy for becoming the best in their career and sacrifice time for Allah (swt).

These things that we seek can all be good with the correct balance and moderation for the sake of Allah. Seeking a good livelihood can be done for the sake of Allah (swt), but we should not become greedy and spend all our time or effort on this. It can also be harmful for us if we are not doing this all the time, but are doing it with the wrong intention and mindset. Even gaining knowledge can be a bad type of greed, if the knowledge is not for the sake of Allah (swt), and is instead for the sake of our ego. It can also be bad if we try to do something good, but neglect our other responsibilities. For example, if we try to gain knowledge all day, but don't help our parents when they need our help or ask.

CONSEQUENCES OF BAD ḤIRṢ

ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, who joined the army of Yazīd, is an example of how bad greed turns you away from Allah (swt). He grew up with Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), and the two were playmates in their childhood. However, his greed for this world led him to turn against the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) in Karbala. He was greedy for wealth and governance of the city of Rey, which Yazīd had promised to give him. A couple days before ʿĀshūrāʾ, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) met with ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and invited him to join the side of truth. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) guaranteed him all of the treasures in Jannah if he came to his side, but ʿUmar was too greedy for this world. His greed became his new purpose, blinding him from the real one — nearness to Allah (swt). In the end, he did not gain the wealth he desired.

THINK ALOUD: In today's world, what are some things people want too much of? Can you think of examples of this?

Being greedy for things in this world can have many negative consequences. The first consequence is that it prevents us from optimizing our potential in this world and the Hereafter. When we become greedy for something that is limited, we will spend all our efforts trying to attain more and more. We get trapped by our greed and we aren't able to focus on what's really important.

According to Imām Bāqir (ʿa), A greedy person is like a silk-worm that keeps on wrapping itself in a cocoon it can't escape from until it finally dies of grief!

The second consequence of ḥirṣ is that the love and desire you chase can end up replacing your ultimate goal of getting closer to Allah. For example, if a person loves food so much it can reach the point where their goal in life is not to fulfill their ultimate purpose but to fulfill their endless desire for food. They become someone who lives to eat, rather than only eating to live. This leads to ghaflah (heedlessness), which makes them inattentive of the fact that this world is only temporary.

Another example of this is someone who wants to gain more wealth. If this becomes someone's first goal, they may even get a ḥarām job if it means they can earn more money.

Sometimes, bad ḥirs can be about something that isn't material, like wanting more likes on a social media post or video to show off. We can also waste time on something if we are being greedy about it. For example, if we are trying to be the best at a sport, we might neglect the other parts of our lives.

The third consequence of greed is that it leads to a lack of contentment and happiness. If we want to live a content life, we have to look beyond the material world. Being greedy prevents us from being content, instead we end up spending all our time looking to satisfy that greed.

The fourth consequence of greed is that it can make us stingy. We see that there are some people who have accumulated a lot of wealth, yet they are very stingy with sharing that wealth. A lot of celebrities and CEOs are like this, even if they are the wealthiest people.

HOW TO PREVENT BAD ḤIRṢ

As noted above, ḥirṣ leads us towards endlessly wanting more of anything and everything.

1. Remembering Death	When we realize that we will only live for a finite amount of time, this helps us remove our ḥarām desires and wakes us up. It makes the dunya — this world — insignificant in our eyes, making us softer in nature and strengthening our belief in Allah's (swt) promises. Visiting the graveyard, reciting Qur'ān for the marḥūmīn (those who have passed away), and participating in funerals are some of the ways to remember death.
2. Doing our Taklīf	When we do our responsibilities daily, it will help us in every action that we do and keep us from different vices. When we do what is wājib and stay away from what is ḥarām, and be kind to others, we are constantly thinking about Allah (swt) and practicing taqwā, God-consciousness.
3. Being Grateful	When we are grateful to Allah (swt) for what we have, it will help us not be greedy for things that we do not have.
4. Reflecting	Whenever we try to do an action, we should think about why we are doing that action. When we purchase something or try to achieve something, we should reflect on why we are doing it and whether it is taking us closer to or further away from Allah (swt). For example, trying to get a job that earns good money or getting something expensive isn't necessarily bad, but we have to look at what our intention is and whether it's good in the first place. For example, if we try to get a good, ḥalāl job, but we do not have time for our other responsibilities, like spending quality time with our family, helping out at home, and volunteering at our local center, then maybe we should reconsider. If we find ourselves wanting to regularly overeat or overspend, we should question our intention, and remind ourselves that this type of greediness will never lead us to what we really need and want.

CONCLUSION

We have learned that ḥirṣ is an inherent intense desire or greed found in humans. However, the kind of ḥirṣ we train ourselves to possess determines which category of humans we belong to.

Bad ḥirṣ places us among the group of people who are unhappy, unsatisfied, ungrateful, and on a path that leads us away from Allah (swt) and our purpose. This category faces degradation and never finds peace, happiness, or spiritual gain.

The other group is those who have good ḥirṣ and are eager for those things that will lead them closer to Allah (swt) and attain their purpose. This category rises above and beyond the previous group, finding contentment and achieving the best in both this world and the Hereafter.

Activity 2.2: My Strategies for Battling Greed

1. Reflect on some things you really want. It could be wealth or something you want to buy too much of, social media likes, food, or something you want that you are spending too much time on. Write it down.

Using the strategies listed in "How to prevent bad ḥirs", write how you would like to change these things.

2. What are some things you would like to have good ḥirs about, (ex: gaining knowledge of the Qurʾān, knowledge of Ahl al-Bayt, perfecting your akhlaq). Be as specific as possible.

Write some goals for the next week for how you want to get rid of bad ḥirs and incorporate good ḥirs.

CHAPTER 3

Family and Friendships

3.1 Being Good to Parents

3.2 True Friendship

3.1 Being Good to Parents

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify ways to build trust with our parents
- Recognize Qurʾānic guidelines for how to treat parents
- Analyze what to do in difficult situations involving parents

THINK ALOUD: What are some reasons why it's important to be good to our parents?

Having a good relationship with our parents is a key to success both in this world and the next. We are told in ḥadīth that if you maintain love and respect for your parents, you will see positive effects not only in the next world but also in all areas of your life in this world.

Society is made up of various communities, and communities are made up of families. The core of every family is the parental unit. Therefore, in order for us to have healthy communities, and societies we must start with the people at home—our family. After all, they are the foundation of society as a whole.

We have an example from the life of one of our great ʿulamāʾ, Ayatullah Marʿashī Najafī, who compiled manuscripts for one of the biggest Islamic libraries located in the city of Qum. He had great respect for his parents, even as a young person. When he was a young man of around 11 or 12 and lived with his parents in Najaf, his mother said to Ayatullah Najafī, "I would like you to go to the study room and let your father know that lunch is ready."

Baba, it's time to eat!
Baba-joon is fast asleep!
How can I wake him?!
option 1
Baba-joon, it's time to eat! Please wake up!
option 2
BABA-JOON!!
No, no. There has to be a better way.
I think I know...
Mâshâ'Allâh, you are so thoughtful. I want to make du'â for you so that you continue to make the right choices.

When Āyatullāh Najafi went upstairs, he saw that his father had fallen asleep on top of his books. He wanted to fulfill what his mother wanted, but he didn't want to disturb his father's sleeping. Ayatullah Najafi, as a child, stood trying to think of what would be the best thing to do. He decided to kiss his father so that when his father woke up, he would be happy to see his son. When Ayatullah Najafi's father woke up and saw his son being so sweet, he became very happy and started to do duʿā for his son. Ayatullah Najafi has said that every one of these duʿās that his father made had come true.

BUILDING TRUST WITH OUR PARENTS

As we get older, we start gaining experience of our own, and it may seem that our parents have different perspectives. We should try to understand our parents' perspective by consciously putting ourselves in their shoes. Living amongst people that are not Muslims or who do not have the same beliefs as us may make our parents more cautious about whom we spend our time with or what places we can go to. Parents don't always tell us the things we want to hear—it's because they want the best for us and it's a way of showing they care.

For example, maybe your parents do not allow you to go on a trip with others in your school, or they don't allow you to stay out as late as some of your friends. They probably (and should!) have a lot of restrictions around how and when you can use devices. Although they may trust you to not do anything wrong, there are spiritual and practical dangers that come with allowing you to be around people or in places that they do not know or trust. This may also cause us to be tempted to do bad towards our parents. Even if we are influenced a little at first, we can easily be deceived by our desires, which is why prevention is a key solution and protection. If you know your parents do not want you to go somewhere or do something that you want to do, it is better to rely on their experience and love for the best toward you. Allah sees this patience and will reward you in the Hereafter.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Another important area where we need to maintain respect towards our parents is when communicating with them. There are two types of communication: verbal and nonverbal. We talked about how we should trust our parents' wisdom, but if we disagree with our parents, we should always communicate with them respectfully. We should do this, even in our non-verbal communication, by avoiding things such as rolling our eyes, breathing sharply out of anger, or looking at them angrily.

THINK ALOUD: What are examples of verbal and nonverbal communication that are respectful and good?

Effective communication is the foundation of a positive relationship with our parents that can open up the doors to our success. Part of effective communication is knowing the right time to say or discuss something. For example, if our parents are very tired, or we have discussed a topic many times, maybe they need time to think about what we said.

Alḥamdulillah, the Qurʿān has given us several guidelines on how we should communicate with our parents both verbally and nonverbally.

1 Be good to your parents

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

And be good to your parents[1]

The first guideline that Allah (swt) gives us is to be good to our parents. We should help our parents, not only when they ask but before they even ask. If we shift our perspective, we will notice these opportunities as a way to earn rewards from Allah (swt). One example is the opportunity to help them bring in grocery bags from the car without them asking. Some other ways we can be good to our parents are showing that we appreciate their advice, noticing the good they do for us and thanking them for that, and praying for them.

These types of acts please Allah (swt), as He mentions in the Qurʿān that He loves the muḥsinīn (those who do good). The muḥsinīn anticipate the needs and wants of others and fulfill these needs before even being asked. Additionally, the muḥsinīn do not look for rewards or even acknowledgment; they simply want to help others and understand that their reward lies with Allah (swt).

2 Speak to them with honor and kindness

وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

And speak to them with honorable words[1]

Another guideline for communicating with our parents is to use "*qawlan karīmā*," which means we should speak to them with honor and kindness. Sometimes, we may not be saying anything wrong, but our tone implies that we are angry or impatient. Instead, we should try to always maintain a pleasant tone and only use the best words when we are speaking to our parents.

We can also honor our parents through our actions. One way we can do this is by standing up and giving them our seat when they enter the room. We should at least acknowledge and greet them when they enter the home ro room, and show happiness and respect. One way of showing them respect is to try to include them in the conversation if we are talking to others.

3 Do not even say "uff"

فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَا أُفٍّ

Do not say to them, "uff!"[1]

A third guideline Allah gives us in the Qurʿān is to refrain from talking back or arguing with our parents. In fact, we should not even say something such as "uff," which is the smallest and most insignificant word in Arabic—an expression of being displeased. In English, the equivalent word would be something like "ugh", or an exasperated sigh. When we talk to our parents, we should address them with respect and genuine interest. If we disagree with something they say, we need to maintain respect and state our case politefully and *kindly*. While this may not always be easy, it is something we can improve on with practice.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Isrāʾ, 17:23

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

THINK ALOUD: When might it be difficult to listen to our parents? Why is it important that we still listen to them and respect them?

Allah (swt) has given us examples of difficult family situations. The uncle of Prophet Ibahīm (ʿa) refused to follow Islam. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (ʿa) threw him down a well. Still, they were forgiving and spoke with kind words. As we get older, we might notice that our parents aren't always perfect, or maybe they have some disagreements. We might overhear them argue with one another, or see that they are upset with each other. It is natural to feel saddened when we see this as their children—after all we love our parents and want to see them get along all the time! But disagreement is natural, and our parents can still love each other but disagree about some things.

We should never blame ourselves if our parents disagree with each other. As long as we are doing our best to treat our parents with respect and kindness, we shouldn't blame ourselves if our parents argue. If you are feeling bad that your parents argue, let them know about your feelings, respectfully. You can request them to have their disagreements in private. If there is something happening that disturbs you, and you aren't able to talk about it with your parents, or it's not getting resolved, you can also reach out to a trusted individual for help.

Sometimes, parents don't get along to a point where they decide to separate from each other, temporarily or even permanently. This process can be very difficult for parents and children to bear. You might feel like you need to try and solve the problem, or to take sides, but instead you should just pray for them and for the best outcomes. Remember that life is filled with tests and being patient with separated or divorced parents reminds us of the need to depend on Allah (swt) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) for support. Also if you feel confused get advice from your parents, other loved and trusted adults or a religious/scholar counselor. We should be thankful for whatever we have gotten from our parents and continue to do our responsibility towards them even if they decide to separate or get divorced.

The one time we should always be firm with people, even our parents, is when someone wants us to do something Allah (swt) does not like. We should never listen to anyone, even our parents, if they ask us to do something against what Allah (swt) wants from us.

CONCLUSION

Parents are a blessing from Allah (swt). They provide us with love and support throughout our lives. They care for us and help guide us in every way they can. Islam identifies our duty towards them and calls for proper and kind behavior, pointing out that much of our success depends on these positive interactions with them. Our affectionate, respectful, and self-controlled behavior towards them pleases Allah (swt) and in turn, He showers us with blessings in this life and the Hereafter.

Activity 3.1: Being Good to my Parents

1. What are some examples of times you might not act the best with your parents? (You won't be sharing this)

2. What are some examples of things you do to help your parents?

3. What are some things you'd like to try to do more to be good to your parents?

4. For the next week, write down when you could have done better at being good to your parents. Also keep track of when you do something good towards your parents.

SUN	
MON	
TUE	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	

5. End of the Week Reflection: How did you do this week? How would you like to improve more in the future?

3.2 True Friendship

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the difference between a friend and an acquaintance
- Recognize good friends are a blessing from Allah (swt)
- Outline components of true friendship
- Explain how to have moderation in friendship
- Explain why we should surround ourselves with people that remind us of Allah (swt)
- Develop strategies for complex social situations

In our life, we may be *acquainted* with a lot of people. We know our family members, teachers, classmates, colleagues — and the list goes on.

THINK ALOUD: What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?

Typically, the answer given is that those who are closest with us and share similar interests and beliefs are our friends. We usually spend a lot of time with friends and care about them. Others who we know and see regularly but have not built a relationship with are classified as our acquaintances.

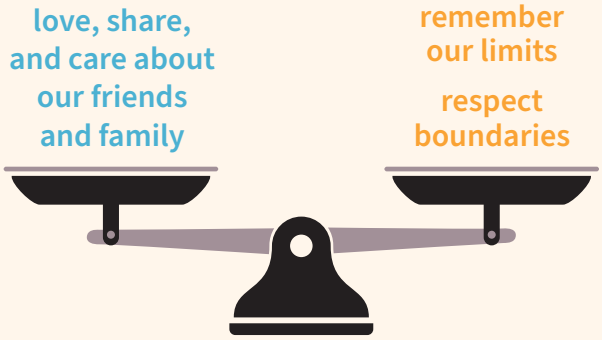
Activity 3.2a: Components of a True Friendship

Besides Allah (swt) and the Maʿṣūmīn, others will genuinely care for you and wish to see you improve. You may become their friend and share valuable experiences with them. While this is great, it is also important to remember that friendship is not about good times alone — it comes with responsibilities and maturity. As you make friends, it is important to ponder about the following key concepts of a true friendship, with the aid of a worksheet.

COMPONENT OF A TRUE FRIENDSHIP (Ḥadīth)	**EXAMPLE YOU MAY HAVE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED, OR YOU CAN IMAGINE**
MUTUAL RESPECT Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa): Just as your friend respects you, you need to respect them.	
GENUINE CARE Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa): Friends make you aware of your shortcomings or wrongdoings. They warn you that you might be doing something harmful.	
TRUSTWORTHINESS Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa): Friends keep your secrets, but if your secret is something that will hurt you, they will tell someone that is responsible and can help you.	
FORGIVENESS Imām Al-ʿAskarī (ʿa): The best of your friends are those who forget your shortcomings, but never forget your kindness.	

MODERATION IN FRIENDSHIP

When maintaining our friendships, one trait to keep in mind is moderation. Of course we should love, share, and care about our friends and family, but must also remember our limits. Remember to treat each individual fairly, but also differently. This is because each person has his or her own boundaries and different things s/he feels comfortable with. For example, your friend may have different boundaries than your siblings or parents and might not feel comfortable with certain things your family doesn't even notice.



Additionally, we should follow guidelines when interacting physically, verbally, and emotionally, even while texting and chatting. We should exercise control and not be nosy even when we feel inquisitive about our friends. It is not necessary for us to know every single thing about what others are doing or whom they are with.

WHOM TO CHOOSE AS FRIENDS

Good friends are a blessing from Allah and bring us fun and happiness. They can also keep us in check and advise us to make good decisions. In addition, our friends also have a great influence on us. You may have seen that often your habits and interests change based on the interests of your friends. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has warned us to be cautious about whom we choose to befriend.

In another tradition, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) narrates that when Prophet ʿĪsā's (ʿa) disciples asked him whom they should spend their time with, he replied, "With someone who, when you look at them, reminds you of Allah, their actions motivate you for the hereafter, and when they speak you learn something."

A true friend is someone who is truly invested in your success in both this world and the next.

From these ḥadīth we see that a true friend is someone who is truly invested in your success in both this world and the next. You would expect your friend to guide you in what does and doesn't look good on you, for example, but it's even more important to have someone who will guide you to be successful in the next world by reaching your fullest potential. Therefore, we should make a conscious effort to choose friends who will help us become closer to our purpose —perfection. Our friends should be those who genuinely care for us and inspire us to become closer to Allah, people whose interest lies in your well-being and want to help you find the path to your perfection.

Therefore, anyone who wants to help us be successful in this world and the next is our friend. In reality then our siblings, our parents, the Maʿṣūmīn and even Allah are our friends.

WHAT IF I CAN'T FIND A FRIEND?

THINK ALOUD: Is having a lot of friends better than having a few friends?

Having a true friend is a blessing from Allah (swt). If we have such a friend, we should make sure we keep them as friends and thank Allah (swt) for the blessings.

THINK ALOUD: How can we keep good friends as friends?

If we don't have such a friend, we shouldn't despair, we should ask Allah to send us such a friend. We should also remember that Allah (swt) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) are always there for us. When they took out Nabī Yūsuf (ʿa) from the well, someone said to the others, be kind to him for he is a stranger. Nabī Yūsuf (ʿa), who according to tradition was only nine years old at the time, responded,

> "One who is with Allah will never be alone."[1]

Ideally there would be a lot of people who believe in the same things we do and have the same ethics and practices. But in reality, we live at a time and in places where typically many people have adopted values and practices that are far from the teachings of the Qurʾān, the prophets, our Prophet (ṣ) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). We can be friendly with a larger group of people, and we should never be arrogant towards others, but we shouldn't typically expect to have a large group of close friends who share our same beliefs and practices.

We can be creative about having friends. Sometimes we may meet someone on a trip or through attending a conference out of town who would make a good friend. We can keep in touch with them through writing letters and messaging. Sometimes these people may be our closest friend even though they don't live in the same city.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED

Imagine that you had broken your arm during a soccer accident and were stuck in hospital. You were there all by yourself and felt very lonely.

Now, read the following scenarios and explain why you know this person is or is not a true friend.

- A teammate comes to visit you during visiting hours, and spends an hour by your side, giving you some gifts to cheer you up and promising they will come back and visit you tomorrow.
- A teammate asks what you did wrong to have your arm break. They say maybe Allah (swt) does not care for you and that is why this happened.
- Another teammate comes to visit you unexpectedly just before prayer time and asks how you are. They then help you make wuḍūʾ and pray, make duʾā for your speedy recovery and spend time talking and comforting you before promising to come again at the same time tomorrow.
- Another teammate has taken a video of you crying after you broke your arm. They send you the video and ask why you cried.
- One of your teammates doesn't visit you in the hospital, but they bring you food at your house when you're back at home. They come before the next soccer game to play board games with you.

1 *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir*, V. 1, P. 33

ISLAMIC GREETINGS

Part of maintaining good friendships is to know how to greet each other. Let us quickly learn some rules of Islamic greetings.

Islam encourages us to greet all people in a friendly and kind manner. We should try to be the first to start a greeting as this is the tradition of our Prophet (ṣ).

If someone else greets us first, then we have to make sure we reply in an equal manner, though we are recommended to reply with a better or longer greeting.

Shaking hands and hugging other believers of the same gender are also recommended practices that build and strengthen friendship.

HUMOR

THINK ALOUD: Can you think of some good jokes that do not go against Islamic values? Are there any famous comedians that make these kinds of jokes?

Islam is a religion which encourages humor. Humor, when used in a balanced and correct way, can be a way of strengthening relationships with family and friends. However, when joking, we must make sure that we do so within the boundaries of Islam, by:

- Not lying (people should understand that you are joking).
- Not hurting someone's feelings, making fun of others, or being racist.
- Not becoming a clown by joking way too often as others will see us as foolish and never take us seriously.
- Not disrespecting holy occasions or places.
- Not becoming over-friendly with non-maḥrams.

Activity 3.2b: Scenarios and Review Questions

DIRECTIONS: Read the following scenarios and explain what you think the person should do in the situation.

1. Raniya is having a hard time making conversation with the girls that she grew up with. They're interested in talking badly about other people a lot. What should she do?

2. Husayn is having a hard time finding friends at school. He's worried about how to start conversations with new people. What should he do?

3. Ali notices that the jokes that people around him makes often hurt other people's feelings, especially when they are playing games. What should he do?

1. A good friend is one who:
   - **a.** Reminds us of playing soccer.
   - **b.** Reminds us of watching TV.
   - **c.** Reminds us of Allah (swt)

2. Islam encourages us to:
   - **a.** Keep ourselves away from other humans.
   - **b.** Build strong friendships with good Muslims

3. We won't make good friends if:
   - **a.** We are rude and disrespectful.
   - **b.** We are kind and pious.
   - **c.** We are well mannered.

4. If we have no friends we may become:
   - **a.** Cheerful
   - **b.** Sociable
   - **c.** Lonely

5. Islam encourages to:
   - **a.** Greet others kindly, and be the first to greet.
   - **b.** Wait for others to greet us.
   - **c.** Not greet others.

6. Islam encourages humour, but we have to make sure that we:
   - **a.** Never be serious
   - **b.** Never lie, never hurt others, and do not become a 'clown'
   - **c.** Never laugh

CHAPTER 4

Relationships and Etiquettes

4.1 The Best Speech

4.2 Lying and Honesty

4.3 Trusts and Promises

4.1 The Best Speech

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify examples of good and bad speech
- Identify the connection between ʿibādah and helping others
- Explain the purpose of speaking
- Recognize the consequences of overspeaking
- Explain the connection between the etiquette of speaking and social media
- Recognize tips for having good speech
- Develop personal strategies for having the best speech

HOOK ACTIVITY: Create a word web of good speech and bad speech. (ex: saying thank you, gossiping)

THE BEST SPEECH

Tayyibah prays and fasts but is rude and arrogant to others. Kulthum speaks sweetly to others but is lax when it comes to her prayers and wajibāt.

THINK ALOUD: Whose practice of Islam is better, Tayyibah or Kuslum? What advice would you give to each of them?

In the above scenario, we cannot really tell who practices Islam better, and we're not in the position to judge fully. However there are some concerning signs for both Tayyibah and Kulsum.

When Tayyibah is rude and arrogant with others, it takes her away from Allah (swt), even if she is doing ʿibādah. Tayyibah's ʿibādah should help her grow her love towards Allah (swt). It should make her be more like the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). The more she grows her awareness of Allah (swt), the more humble she should become. She should realize that ḥaqq un-nās, the rights of others, are very important in the eyes of Allah (swt), and she needs to look at fixing her ʿibādah and her actions with others.

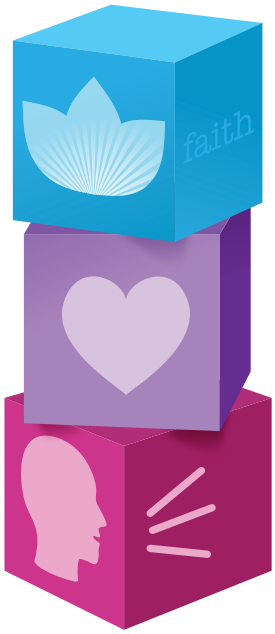
It is good that Kulsum is kind to others, but she should remember that doing wajibāt and staying away from ḥarām will help her get closer to Allah (swt). If she misses her ʿibādah, this will keep her from her full potential and purpose. If she does ʿibādah, it will help her to always say the right thing in the right way at the right time. Also, if Kulsum is kind to other human beings, she should also be kind to herself! Intentionally neglecting wajibāt will be a source of harm to her spiritual self.

A true Muslim tries to perform their responsibilities in every moment and in every aspect of their lives. ʿibādah is important and necessary, but Islam is more than formal worship, it is a way of life. For example, if our parents ask us to help them with something, but we are reading Qurʾān or doing something else that is mustaḥab, it is better for us to help our parents first. It is wājib to be kind to our parents and serving others has a special place with Allah (swt).

We can see from the lives of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) that although they did ʿibādah and worship like reading Qurʾān, making duʾās and praying Ṣalāt ul-Layl, they also helped others. They were generous to their families, to the poor, and to those in need.

THINK ALOUD: How do we imagine the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) spoke to others? Why is it important to speak the way they did?

Our tongue is a gift from Allah (swt). We must use our tongue in the best way, as a way to get closer to Allah (swt) and reach our purpose. It is very easy to say something that would be detrimental to our souls and to others without thinking. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has explained this to us, "Most of the mistakes a human being makes are with his tongue."



Our tongue is also the leader for other body parts. For example, a fist fight or brawl might be started because of harsh words. Yet, if we speak kindly to others, like our family members, it will lead us to being kinder to them in our actions. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said,

> The faith of one does not become steady unless his heart becomes steady, and his heart will not become steady unless his tongue becomes steady [and controlled].

Communication is very powerful. It allows us to learn from one another and optimize our potential to reach higher levels of humanity and progress towards our ultimate goal: perfection. But, when done incorrectly, communication can destroy people and relationships.

Islam has provided detailed guidelines on communicating in a way that pleases Allah (swt). In our previous lesson, we talked about communication with ourselves, or reflection, and communication with Allah (swt) and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). This lesson discusses communication with others, or social communication.

Allah (swt) says in the Noble Qurʾān:

> And when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: 'Worship no one but Allah (swt), do good to parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give the zakāt'[1]

In this verse, speaking kindly to people is mentioned before prayer and zakāt. This shows that our worship to Allah (swt) includes speaking kindly to others.

In this verse Allah (swt) does not go into detail about what speaking kindly to others means. This is because our ʿaql, or intellect, guides us to what is the best thing to say in different circumstances. Of course we have to keep in mind guidelines that the sharīʿah — Islamic laws — also gives us for what is not acceptable, like backbiting and swearing.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:83

THINKING BEFORE WE SPEAK

THINK ALOUD: What is the purpose of speaking? Have you ever said something that you later regretted saying? What are some of the consequences of overspeaking?

We have all had the experience of regretting something that we said in the past. The reason this happens is because we often do not think before speaking. Sometimes, it might seem like the culture of social interactions is fast-paced, and it may feel awkward to sit in silence. However, our words can often profoundly harm others. In numerous ḥadīth of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), they have told us that the sanctity of the believer is greater than the sanctity of the Kaʾbah. Take a moment to reflect on this. How do we treat the Kaʾbah?

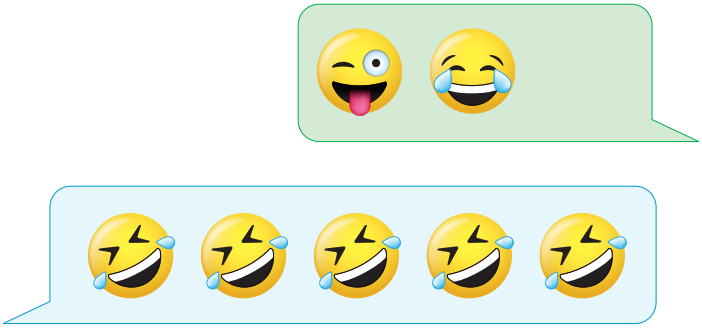
In previous lessons we have learned about ḥaqullāh, the rights of Allah and ḥaq un-nās, the rights of people. Allah (swt) cares about the dignity of people as a whole, and His sincere believers have additional dignity. In a ḥadith of Imām Jaʿfar Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa), we learn that whoever belittles a believer, whether he be poor or not, this person will be belittled himself until he stops belittling others. Belittling happens through treating someone disrespectfully and one of the most common examples of that is making fun of others.

Overspeaking and speaking quickly can lead us to say things without thinking them through. For example, if everyone is making jokes at the expense of others, sometimes you might make a joke quickly to keep the laughter going, and realize afterwards that it was not very kind. If we are joking with someone else, we should make sure that the joke is okay to make. The Prophet (ṣ) appreciated jokes, but only if they were tasteful jokes and not harmful or offensive to others.

We may even ridicule people without realizing it. When we think about the way we speak with others, we should hold ourselves to a high standard. We do not want to say something that insults the dignity of a believer. This is why we should be careful about mentioning our own accomplishments, wealth, and possessions and not to talk arrogantly or boastfully or in a way that might make another person feel unaccomplished. Remember to be thankful and that everything we have comes from Allah (swt).

THE BEST SPEECH ONLINE

THINK ALOUD: What is the purpose of social media? What do people use social media for? Do the rules of interacting with others change when we are texting or using social media? What are some examples of uses for social media that may seem good but may be wrong?



Minding our tongue is not only limited to what we say to people with our tongues, but also what we say through email, statuses, posts, texting and of course on social media. What we say online is still recorded in our book of deeds, so we have to remember the guidelines of Islam and make sure what we are writing and posting is good.

We have to be careful with how and who we talk to on social media. People use social media to connect with others or share their hobbies, which could be beneficial, but sometimes even these things can be negative. For example, someone

may joke around with non-mahrams. Or, they might look at, or favorite/like their pictures where they are trying to be attractive or bring attention to themselves. Someone might also use social media to talk down to others or to show off what they have.

We should remember our purpose in everything that we do, including when and if we want to use social media. It is okay to not to use social media when there is no good reason or purpose to. It is okay to choose not to post, or to take a break from posting if you realize you are doing it for the wrong reasons or have become too attached to it. Our interactions on social media remain forever so we need to be careful. If someone tries to interact with you that you are not comfortable with, there is no reason to reply, and you can always talk to a trusted adult if you need help.

HOW TO HAVE THE BEST SPEECH

1. Surround Ourselves with Good	After spending time with someone, we might realize that they speak better than us. They don't complain, or speak badly of others. We should try to spend more time with these people when we can, to build good habits.
2. Build our Connection with Maʾṣumīn	A true connection with Allah and the Maʿṣūmīn (ʿa) can help us to fight off the inclination to be unpleasant and instead become better for the sake of Allah (swt). We should pray to Allah (swt) that we can learn to speak better, and ask the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) to help us become like them.
3. Remembrance of Allah (swt)	It helps us to read Qurʾān regularly, to keep the words of Allah (swt) in our hearts and on our tongues. It allows our communication to be free of language that consists of anger, jealousy, or hurtful words — and it is this kind of conversation that truly benefits. Eventually we will find that all our conversations, even our jokes, are being made with Allah's (swt) approval in mind. This will strengthen our taqwā and help us to be more conscious of God in all areas of our lives.
4. Reflect on our Speech	Reflecting on our actions each day can help us communicate with others better. For example, you might realize that you often lash out at someone or pick on someone. When you observe this through reflection, the next time someone lashes out at you, you will realize it may not have to do with you — maybe they are just having a bad day. This enables us to be more understanding of others and be more patient with them. If we say something and realize we should not have said it, we should ask for forgiveness from Allah (swt) and try to fix ourselves.

Activity 4.1a: Draw and Reflect

DIRECTIONS: Read the ayahs from Sūrah Ibrahīm below, then draw the two different types of trees mentioned in the ayāt.

"Have you not regarded how Allah (swt) has drawn a parable? A good word is like a good tree: its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky. It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord. Allah draws these parables for mankind so that they may take admonition. And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree: uprooted from the ground, it has no stability."[2]

REFLECTION: How do you think our words act like these two types of trees?

2 *Noble Qurʾān,* Ibrāhīm, 14:24-25

Activity 4.1b: Questions and Reflection

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions, then do the reflection calendar below.

1. What are some bad speech habits you fall into? (No need to share this)

2. What are some strategies you want to use for fixing these habits?

3. Are there situations you can avoid to keep from some of these habits?

4. Are there people you can surround yourself with that have good speech?

5. What are some good speech habits that you want to start?

6. Which of your bad speech habits can you replace with good ones?

7. Do you use social media? Why or why not?

8. What are social media habits you would like to fix (if you have social media)?

Over the next week, write down your goals for speaking and reflect on how you did each day.
For example:

GOAL: Speak kindly to my siblings (because I was harsh with them yesterday)

REFLECTION: Today I was better about speaking kindly, but I did say some things that they didn't like, I want to improve this tomorrow inshallah.

SUN	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
MON	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
TUE	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
WED	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
THU	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
FRI	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
SAT	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**

4.2 Lying and Honesty

OBJECTIVES:

- Explain what several ḥadith say about lying
- Recognize the Consequences of lying
- Identify the reasons why some people might lie
- Explain how lying can be avoided
- Recognize what the Qurʾān says about lying
- Analyze real-life situations where people have faced consequences for lying

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Read the following ḥadīth and then answer the questions below in pairs.
It has been narrated from Imām Al-Riḍā (ʿa), "The Seal of the Prophets (Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)) was asked if a believer could possibly be cowardly and timid. 'Yes,' he replied. Then they asked him if he could be stingy. 'Yes,' he said. 'Can he be a liar?' they asked him. "No!' came the Prophet's reply."

Imām Al-Bāqir (ʿa) said, "Lying is the ruin of faith."

Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Hanẓalah narrated that Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said, "One who is only verbally in agreement with us, but is opposed to our deeds and words is not one of our followers. Shīʿas are those who not only say that they agree with us, but they also accept us in their hearts. They follow our writings and our actions. They are our true followers."[2]

1. Explain, in your own words, what each ḥadīth is saying about lying.
2. Why do you think lying is such a detested sin?
3. What are some of the consequences of lying?

To be sincerely truthful is to be sure that our words fully match our actions, and our actions match our words. When we say we are Muslims and followers of Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), we should also ensure that our actions align with this. The Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) were perfect examples of moral character. Their true followers should take their leader and try to perfect their character.

CONSEQUENCES OF LYING

Lying can be a form of deception. Deception means to cause someone to believe something that is not true. It is often done just to gain some personal advantage. For example, if my parents ask me if I did my homework and I lie and say 'yes', when in fact I haven't done it yet, this is deception.

When someone lies in order to deceive others, they are in reality deceiving and harming themselves more than others. We cannot deceive Allah (swt), because He knows what is in our hearts. In the Qurʾān, Allah (swt) says of the hypocrites:

2 *Bihār Al-Anwār*, V. 65, P. 164

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware. There is a sickness in their hearts; then Allah increased their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell.[3]

WHY DO PEOPLE LIE?

THINK ALOUD: What are some reasons you think people might lie?

Some common reasons why people lie are:

1. They care about maintaining a certain image with others to the point where they are willing to bend the truth in order to keep that image.
2. They want to avoid being embarrassed about something.
3. Sometimes people lie to avoid consequences. For example, a student might be talking in class when they are not supposed to. When the teacher asks them if they were talking, they would lie to get out of trouble.
4. They want others to laugh.
5. Sometimes people like to reach a goal without hassle; for example, someone who wants to cheat so that they can get good grades without working.

If we lie in order to reach goals, the blessings we might have gained from that thing we wanted will be ruined. Imām Husayn (ʿa) is reported to have said:

When someone tries to achieve a goal by disobeying Allah, this will cause him to miss out on what he hopes to gain and to face what he feared even quicker.[4]

It may seem like lying is helping us achieve our goals, but in reality, every action that we do has real consequences. Someone might achieve short term gains by lying but in the long run they will not truly get blessings from their results.

Remember that our purpose is to get closer to Allah (swt)

HOW CAN LYING BE AVOIDED?

Once, Imām Ṣādiq (ʿa) was walking with his son, Ismāʿīl, and a friend. When they reached the Imām's house, the Imām (ʿa) did not invite the man inside.

3 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:9-10

4 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 2, P. 373

Later on, Ismāʿīl asked the Imām (ʿa), "Why didn't you invite him inside?" The Imām said, "I wasn't ready to receive him as a guest." His son said, "You could have invited him just as a formality. He wouldn't have actually accepted!" The Imām (ʿa) replied, "I don't want Allah to count me among the people who pretend."[5]

If we remember that our purpose is to get closer to Allah (swt) we will not be overly concerned about what people think, as long as we are doing our responsibility. We will not care about wealth and other worldly pleasures to the point where we will want to distort the truth. We will not care about whether we will lose out telling the truth — in fact, we would not even think of lying because it would displease our Lord, and cause us to really be losers!

To train ourselves to stop lying, we have to remember a few important points:

- To do what Allah (swt) tells us is right is more important than our desires or making other people happy. Therefore, we should please Allah (swt) by telling the truth, even if this might seem bad for us at first.
- Lying usually leads to more lying, and so if we lie that first time, we will have to keep weaving lies and this will cause stress.
- The truth always appears, and liars will eventually be exposed. Allah (swt) says in the Noble Qurʾān:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

And say: "Truth has come and bāṭil (falsehood) has vanished. Surely! Bāṭil (falsehood) is ever bound to vanish."[6]

Sometimes, we see that public figures get away with lying. This is either because:

a) these figures abuse their position of power, or

b) the people that elected them are too complacent and unwilling to speak out against injustice, or

c) the society's morality has become so low that lying is acceptable or even appreciated. Sometimes, these figures will be exposed and embarrassed during their lifetimes. But we should remember that Allah is the All-Just, and on the Day of Judgment everything will be revealed.

LYING SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED

Lying is so discouraged in Islam that Islam teaches us to speak out against those who lie. Allah (swt) tells the Banī Isrāʾīl in the Noble Qurʾān not to lie:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And mix not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know (the truth).[7]

This command is, of course, not only for the Banī Isrāʾīl and how they used to hide parts of the Tawrāt when it wasn't to their advantage, but for anyone who is conscious of God and in all aspects of their life. The verse tells us that we should not conceal or hide the truth when we know it.

We should also not listen to liars or obey or follow them. Imām Bāqir (ʿa) said, "Whoever listens [and follows] a speaker has indeed worshiped him. So if the speaker speaks on behalf of Allah, he has obeyed Allah. And if he speaks on behalf of the Shayṭān, he has obeyed the Shayṭān."[8] We need to be careful about who we are listening to and who we are being influenced by. We will notice many actors and singers present a distorted version of reality that promotes immorality. People who listen to their songs tend to be influenced by their words and lifestyles.

Not following and obeying liars means that we should not follow or take as leaders people who are obviously liars, like many corrupt politicians. Instead, we should listen to truthful people, who teach us about our God, our Prophets and our religion, and who guide us in making correct decisions.

5 *Bihār Al-Anwār*, V. 3, P. 457

6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Isrāʾ , 17:81

7 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Baqarah, 2:42

8 *Al-Kāfī*, V. 6, P. 434

Activity 4.2a: Read and Discuss

DIRECTIONS: You will be assigned one of the following two articles to read. After reading, answer the following reflection questions.

1. Summarize the article in your own words (1-3 sentences).

2. Who was lying? What were they trying to achieve by lying?

3. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) has said, "When someone tries to achieve a goal by disobeying Allah, this will cause him to miss out on what he hopes to gain and to face what he feared even quicker."

   How does this ḥadīth relate to the article? Were they able to achieve their goals?

The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/us/27mit.html

Dean at M.I.T. Resigns, Ending a 28-Year Lie

Marilee Jones, who arrived at M.I.T. in 1979, became well known as a leader of the movement to tame the college admissions frenzy.
Chitose Suzuki/Associated Press

By Tamar Lewin

April 27, 2007

Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, became well known for urging stressed-out students competing for elite colleges to calm down and stop trying to be perfect. Yesterday she admitted that she had fabricated her own educational credentials, and resigned after nearly three decades at M.I.T. Officials of the institute said she did not have even an undergraduate degree.

“I misrepresented my academic degrees when I first applied to M.I.T. 28 years ago and did not have the courage to correct my résumé when I applied for my current job or at any time since,” Ms. Jones said in a statement posted on the institute’s Web site. “I am deeply sorry for this and for disappointing so many in the M.I.T. community and beyond who supported me, believed in me, and who have given me extraordinary opportunities.”

Ms. Jones said that she would not make any other public comment “at this personally difficult time” and that she hoped her privacy would be respected.

Ms. Jones, 55, originally from Albany, had on various occasions represented herself as having degrees from three upstate New York institutions: Albany Medical College, Union College and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In fact, she had no degrees from any of those places, or anywhere else, M.I.T. officials said.

A spokesman for Rensselaer said Ms. Jones had not graduated there, though she did attend as a part-time nonmatriculated student during the 1974-75 school year. The other colleges said they had no record of her.

Phillip L. Clay, M.I.T.’s chancellor, said in an interview that a college degree was probably not required for Ms. Jones’s entry-level job in the admissions office when she arrived in 1979. And by the time she was appointed admissions dean in 1997, Professor Clay said, she had already been in the admissions office for many years, and apparently little effort was made to check what she had earlier presented as her credentials.

“In the future,” he said, “we will take a big lesson from this experience.”

Since last fall, Ms. Jones had been making speeches around the country to promote her book, “Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond,” written with a pediatrician, Dr. Kenneth R. Ginsburg. The book had added to her reputation as a kind of guru of the movement to tame the college admissions frenzy.

“Less Stress, More Success” addresses not only the pressure to be perfect but also a need to live with integrity.

“Holding integrity is sometimes very hard to do because the temptation may be to cheat or cut corners,” it says. “But just remember that ‘what goes around comes around,’ meaning that life has a funny way of giving back what you put out.”

Professor Clay said the dean for undergraduate education, Daniel Hastings, received information 10 days ago questioning Ms. Jones's academic background. M.I.T. officials would not say who had provided the information.

"There are some mistakes people can make for which 'I'm sorry' can be accepted, but this is one of those matters where the lack of integrity is sufficient all by itself," Professor Clay said. "This is a very sad situation for her and for the institution. We have obviously placed a lot of trust in her."

On the campus, where Ms. Jones was widely admired, almost revered, for her humor, outspokenness and common sense, students and faculty members alike seemed both saddened and shocked.

"It's like a Thomas Hardy tragedy, because she did so much good, but something she did long ago came back and trumped it," said one friend, Leslie C. Perelman, director of Writing Across the Curriculum at M.I.T.

Mike Hurley, a freshman chemistry student, said, "It was surprising," adding, "Everyone who was admitted here probably knows her, at least her name."

Mr. Hurley said that the admissions office had been unusually accessible, with Ms. Jones's "bright" personality and blogs for incoming students.

"Whenever someone's integrity is questioned," he said, "it sets a bad example, but I feel like the students can get past that and look at what she's done for us as a whole."

Rachel Ellman, who studies aerospace engineering, said, "I feel like she's irreplaceable."

Ms. Jones had received the institute's highest honor for administrators, the M.I.T. Excellence Award for Leading Change, and many college admissions officers and high school college counselors said yesterday that whatever her personal shortcomings, her efforts deserved respect.

"She's been working and presenting a lot of important ideas about our business," said Rod Skinner, director of college counseling at Milton Academy, the Massachusetts prep school. "What I'm hoping is that the quality of the research and the book will hold up."

Ms. Jones was hired by the admissions office in 1979 to recruit young women, who at the time made up only 17 percent of the institute's undergraduates, compared with nearly half today.

Since she entered the field, admissions to M.I.T. and other elite institutions have become increasingly competitive, and she made her mark with her efforts to turn down the flame of competition.

Among other things, she told students that they did not need perfect SAT scores to get into M.I.T. She also redesigned the institute's application form, leaving less space for students to list their extracurricular activities, so as not to imply that every student needed 10 activities to fill the 10 lines that used to be there.

Competition remains fierce, though. For the coming fall, M.I.T. accepted 12 percent of 12,443 applicants.

Those who attended this month's events for admitted students said Ms. Jones had been in good spirits, especially at a Saturday night finale. There, Ms. Jones, who in younger days was a torch singer at upstate New York clubs, took part in a "battle of the bands," singing, "You Can't Always Get What You Want."

Correction: April 30, 2007

A front page article Friday on the resignation of Marilee Jones, M.I.T.'s dean of admissions, misidentified Leslie Perelman, a faculty member who commented on her resignation. He is the director of Writing Across the Curriculum at M.I.T., not the director of the M.I.T. program in writing and humanistic studies.

Christy McKerney contributed reporting from Cambridge, Mass., and Sara Rimer from Boston.

https://www.mysuncoast.com/2020/10/15/c-span-debate-moderator-didnt-post-questionable-tweet/

C-SPAN: Debate moderator suspended after admitting to lying about his twitter feed being hacked

C-SPAN suspends Scully after he admits to lie about hack (Associated Press)

By ABC7 Staff
Updated: Oct. 15, 2020 at 3:45 PM UTC

NEW YORK (ABC News)-- C-SPAN suspended its political editor Steve Scully indefinitely Thursday after he admitted to lying about his Twitter feed being hacked when he was confronted about a questionable exchange with former Trump aide Anthony Scaramucci.

The news came on the day of what was supposed to be a career highlight for the 30-year C-SPAN veteran. Scully was to moderate the second debate between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which was canceled after Trump would not agree to a virtual format because of his COVID-19 diagnosis.

A week ago, after Trump had criticized him as a "never Trumper," Scully tweeted "@Scaramucci should I respond to Trump." Scaramucci, a former Trump communications director and now a critic of the president, advised Scully to ignore him.

Scully said that when he saw his tweet had created a controversy, "I falsely claimed that my Twitter account had been hacked."

He had been frustrated by Trump's comments and several weeks of criticism on social media and conservative news outlets about his role as moderator, including attacks directed at his family, he said.

"These were both errors in judgement for which I am totally responsible for," Scully said. "I apologize."

He said he let down his colleagues at C-SPAN, fellow news professionals and the debate commission. "I ask for their forgiveness as I try to move forward in a moment of reflection and disappointment in myself," he said.

C-SPAN said Scully confessed to lying about the hack on Wednesday.

"He understands that he made a serious mistake," the network said. "We were very saddened by this news and do not condone his actions."

Trump seized on the news, tweeting "I was right again! I was right again! Steve Scully just admitted he was lying about his Twitter being hacked. The Debate was Rigged!"

The debate commission did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Scully has led the network's presidential election coverage since 1992, but the suspension means he won't be part of C-SPAN's election night programming. Scully has been the moderator of "Washington Journal," the weekly call-in program, and regularly hosted other C-SPAN programs.

The network said Scully has consistently demonstrated fairness and professionalism, and built a reservoir of good will.

"After some distance from this episode, we believe in his ability to continue to contribute to C-SPAN," the network said.

Copyright 2020 WWSB. All rights reserved.

Activity 4.2b: Review Questions

1. Lying in action means:
   - **a.** Lying when you are walking
   - **b.** When one's actions do not match up with their beliefs
   - **c.** Lying all the time

2. The worst lie is:
   - **a.** Lies against parents
   - **b.** Lies against oneself
   - **c.** Lies against Allah (swt) or His Prophet

3. The worst consequence of lying is:
   - **a.** People will not like us
   - **b.** We will be deceiving yourself
   - **c.** Allah (swt) will withhold His blessings from us

4. Lying as a joke is:
   - **a.** Allowed if we are not hurting anyone
   - **b.** Allowed if we make sure to say the truth later on
   - **c.** Is never allowed and is therefore a mortal sin

5. People lie to:
   - **a.** Get out of trouble
   - **b.** Get something they want
   - **c.** Both a & b

6. We can train ourselves to stop lying by:
   - **a.** Remembering that what God wants is the most important thing
   - **b.** Remembering that lying will lead to more lying
   - **c.** Both a & b

4.3 Trusts and Promises

OBJECTIVES:

- Explain why it is important to be trustworthy
- Contrast the difference between ḥaqqullāh and ḥaqq un-nās
- Identify examples of keeping promises, such as keeping secrets, and being punctual
- Understand the importance of keeping promises by examining the ruling of breaking the ʾahd to Allah (swt)

THINK ALOUD: Why is it important to be trustworthy?

Trustworthiness is one of the most important obligations in Islam. On a social level, trustworthiness means to fulfil the trust that a person has been given. For example, if someone gives you money to keep safe before they go on a journey, to return this money exactly the way they had entrusted it to you is an example of being trustworthy. Another example is when someone tells you a secret: a trustworthy person would keep the secret safe and wouldn't spread or tell anyone, unless there is a very urgent need to do so that overrides the importance of keeping the secret, such as when someone is in danger.

The best example of being trustworthy is that of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). He was so trustworthy in his lifestyle and his business practices that the people would call him Aṣ-Ṣādiq and Al-Amīn, the Truthful and Trustworthy.

THINK ALOUD: Think about the most trustworthy person you know. They may be your parents, teacher, or friend. Would you believe them even if they told you something that was difficult to believe?

The perfect character of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) was known by his friends as well as his enemies. Therefore, people who knew the Prophet (ṣ) did not follow him because of their arrogance and pride. Many who knew his character and had pure hearts quickly believed and followed the Prophet (ṣ) when he declared his nubūwwah.

ḤAQQULLĀH:
rights of Allah

ḤAQQ UN-NĀS:
rights of people

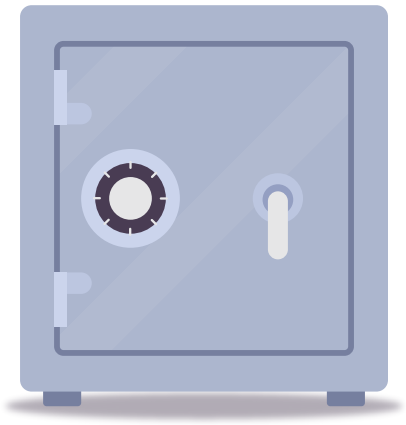
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUSTEE

We have 2 categories of responsibility to fulfill in Islam, **ḥaqqullāh**, rights of Allah (swt), and **ḥaqq un-nās**, rights of people. Ḥaqullāh are the responsibilities that we have only to Allah (swt), like ṣalāh, and fasting. Allah (swt) has given us many trusts in the form of giving us ownership over our body, mind, and soul, and the choices we make. He gave us these blessings so we can worship Him. One day we will be asked about how we used these trusts.

When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) would pray, the color of his face would change and his body would begin to shake. When he was asked why, he said,

> "The time has now arrived to fulfill the trust. It was offered to the skies, earth, and mountains, but they refused to bear it, while human beings chose to bear it!"[1]

Everything we have belongs to Allah (swt). Our duty is to take care of them while we are alive and return them to Him in the state in which they were meant to be returned. We need to take care of our bodies and souls, and not harm them. For example, we should not avoid eating if we need food, or overeat because we want more food. If we do this with the intention of having energy to get closer to Allah (swt), then even eating can be a form of ʿibādah!



The second category, ḥaq un-nās, are rights that other people have over us. When someone entrusts us with something, there is a responsibility we have to fulfil. We want to follow the example of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and bring people closer to Allah with our character. This includes returning the trust to the rightful owner in the condition it was given to us. For example, if someone gave you their laptop to take care of, it becomes your responsibility to return the laptop in the same condition that you received it, unless something that is out of your control happens despite your being careful. If the laptop is damaged because of your not taking care of it properly, you would be liable for repairing or replacing it.

Secondly, it is the responsibility of the person being entrusted to not use the trust for personal gain. For example, if someone gives you their bicycle to look after then you should return it the way it was given to you. You should not ride it for yourself unless the owner has allowed you to use it. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) has said:

> Do not betray a man who trusts you, even if he betrays you. And do not disclose his secrets even if he discloses yours.[2]

We learn from this narration that we cannot break anyone's trust.

Imām Zayn Ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa) said that even if the killer of his father, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), were to leave the sword with which he killed Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) with the Imām as a trust, the Imām (ʿa) would fulfil the trust and give it back to him.[3]

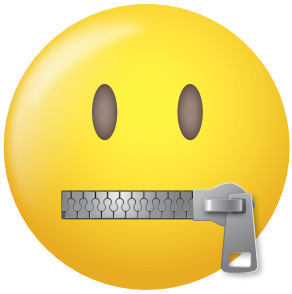
We learn from these examples that we must fulfil all trusts, whether they are given to us by Muslims, non-Muslims, friends, or enemies.

1 Imām ʿAlī was referring to verse 33:72: *"Indeed We presented the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook it…"* In this verse Allah (swt) refers to the role of human beings as being carriers of the Trust, which refers to special abilities and expectations placed on human beings that allow them to reach a high status through worshipping Allah (swt) and following His chosen guides.

2 *Scales of Wisdom*, P. 115

3 *Bihār Al-Anwār*, V. 75, P. 114

KEEPING SECRETS



Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said "When somebody says something and looks around, his speech is a trust and secret (and we try to keep it)"[4]. One of our great ʿulamāʾ, Āyatullāh Makarem Shirazi, explains that we should be careful with people's secrets even if they do not explicitly say that something is a secret. For example, if your friend is about to tell you something, and before they do, they look around to see if anyone is listening, this is sufficient to show that what they tell you is a secret.

Generally, we should not repeat what others say to people even if we think there is a possibility that it was private. If a friend tells you a secret that you think could put them in danger, you should talk to a trusted adult, but do not spread rumors about the secret to unnecessary people. For example, if your friend tells you that they have been talking to or are being followed by a stranger, you should tell a trusted adult that will address the problem, but you should not tell all your friends.

KEEPING OUR PROMISES

Keeping promises and speaking the truth have been mentioned many times in the Qurʾān and have also been emphasized by the sayings and actions of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Allah (swt) says in the Noble Qurʾān:

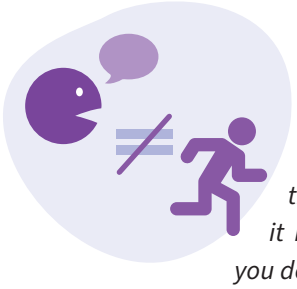
وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

And fulfill the covenant. Verily, the covenant will be questioned about.[5]

It is our duty and responsibility, as this verse states, to keep our promises and speak the truth.

MAKE A PROMISE AND KEEP IT

If we want to be true believers, we should make sure that we do what we say we will do. If we say things and then do not do them, we will be questioned by Allah (swt) and we will earn His displeasure.



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ
كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do.[6]

If we are unsure whether we can keep a promise or not, we should not make that promise in the first place. Instead, we should say that we will try or that we might be able to do something, but we cannot make any promises. If someone makes a definite promise to do something without any conditions (for example, they say they promise to do something and they don't even say inshāʿAllah – if Allah wills), then according to Islamic laws, they need to fulfill this promise to the extent possible. On a fiqhī level, some marājiʿ say that fulfilling it is wajib, according to precaution, and others say it is recommended. All marājiʿ saying that making a promise while intending to not fulfil it is not allowed and is a type of lie.

BEING PUNCTUAL (ON TIME)

One of the teachings of the five daily prayers is to train us to be punctual and perform our duties on time. Being lazy about our spiritual and worldly commitments is discouraged, and can lead to being lazy about all of our affairs. One of the ways that people sometimes break promises is when it comes to time. Someone might promise to show up at their friend's house at a certain time, but then they show up unjustifiably late.

Before making a promise we should first think it through and see whether we are able to follow it through. If we are not sure, we shouldn't make a definite promise. We can say, "Unless something unexpected comes up, I will do it insha'Allah" or "I'll try my best, inshāʿAllah." Then, we should try our best to fulfill our commitments.

4 *Al-Maḥajjah Al-Bayḍāʾ*, V. 5, P. 237
5 *Noble Qurʾān,* Al-Isrāʾ, 17:34
6 *Noble Qurʾān,* Aṣ-Ṣaff, 61:2-3

THE PROBLEM OF BREAKING PROMISES

As Muslims, and followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), we want to make sure that we speak our words with good and true intentions. Sometimes, instead of this, we make promises to people in our day-to-day lives without noticing or realizing the great responsibility of keeping it. For example, we might promise to take our little brother or sister out and play with them, promise our mom that we will help more around the house, or promise to show up at a certain time to help with a volunteer effort. Often we forget our promises or we back out when it starts to get too hard. We promise our children an expensive gift, or promise a person we will help them with a problem, but later realise this promise is too difficult to keep. These acts are not liked by Allah (swt) as we read in the verse above.

Therefore, before we speak and make a promise, we need to think first and see whether we can keep this promise or not. If we cannot, it is far better to not make the promise in the first place.

HYPOCRITES BREAK PROMISES

A person who frequently breaks their promises is considered a hypocrite. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) has said:

> The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when is entrusted, he betrays [the trust]. [7]

Even if we promise a disbeliever or an enemy something then we must keep it. Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) signed a peace treaty with the disbelievers who were fighting Muslims at the time, and he made sure never to violate or break that treaty in any way.

Of course, we should make sure not to make any promises that would lead to us doing something ḥarām. We should also not promise to do anything that we cannot possibly do. We are never allowed to do anything which is not allowed in Islam, even if we have promised to do it.

7 *Al-Faqih*, V. 4, P. 361

BREAKING AN ʿAHD TO ALLAH

The following jurisprudential ruling also shows the importance of a promise.

If one makes an ʿ**ahd** — a promise to Allah (swt) in a certain way to do a certain act for the sake of Allah[8] — and later breaks it out of their own will, they must seek forgiveness and give a kaffārah, or penalty.

This penalty involves feeding a number of poor people or fasting for a lengthy period of time.

CONCLUSION

1. A truly believing Muslim must keep his or her promises under all circumstances. Keeping promises, including being punctual and doing what we say we will do, is a sign of a true believer.
2. Trustworthiness is an extremely important social rule in Islam and is highly encouraged as shown by our Prophets and Imāms.
3. Our body and soul are a trust from Allah (swt) which we must take care of to the best of our ability.
4. Finally, trustworthiness is an obligation with no exceptions. Even if our enemy entrusts us with something, we must fulfil that trust within the limits of ḥalāl and ḥarām.

8 Note that this ruling applies only when someone makes a verbal promise to Allah (swt) out loud in a special manner. It doesn't apply if someone makes a mental promise to Allah (swt), although such promises are good to try and keep as well. The details of this ruling can be found in the practical law books of the Marājiʿ.

Activity 4.3a: Scenarios

DIRECTIONS: Read the following scenarios, then write why the decision might be difficult for the person, and what they should do in the situation. Then, discuss it with the class.

1. Mujtaba and his friend, Zayn go bike riding. Zayn breaks his bike, and tells Mujtaba not to tell their other friends until it's fixed. The next day, Mujtaba and his other friends are going bike riding, and they ask why Zayn didn't come. What should Mujtaba do?

2. Asiyah's uncle asks her if she can help babysit his daughter. Asiyah is about to leave her friend's house to go to her uncle's house, but her friends tell her to stay longer. What should Asiyah do?

3. Sarah is supposed to check on her friend's plants while she is away, but she gets busy with other things and remembers very late to check on them. What should she do?

4. Husayn tells his mom that if he's allowed to stay home, then he'll do chores. When she leaves, his favorite show is coming on. What should he do?

Activity 4.3b: Skits Bonus Activity

DIRECTIONS: Create a skit where a person has to decide whether to break another person's trust or promise, or to do the right thing using the examples above, or your own examples. After your skit, explain why the decision was difficult for the person in the skit and how they overcame it.

CHAPTER 5

Media and Entertainment

5.1 Entertainment in Our Lives

5.2 Media Literacy

5.1 Entertainment in Our Lives

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify how entertainment can sometimes be harmful
- Recognize why our time needs to be spent wisely
- Identify the different types of entertainment, including mental entertainment, physical activities, social entertainment, and media entertainment
- Explain how entertainment can help us balance our lives
- Develop personal strategies for scheduling our daily activities

THE MERCILESS CROWD

The Prophet (ṣ) was strolling through the city one day when he came across a crowd of people on the road laughing and clearly engaged in something fun. As the Prophet (ṣ) drew closer, he saw what they were engaged in—they were laughing while torturing a rooster! The Prophet (ṣ) could hardly believe what was before his very eyes! People *from his city* were laughing while enjoying being cruel to another creature!

The frail rooster in the center of the gathering hopped around in distress, clearly in pain. Loud croaking sounds came from its dry throat. Nonetheless, no one showed any mercy. Blood trickled steadily down its head and feathers were scattered over the ground. Then, they started throwing stones and firing arrows at the rooster from every angle.

The rooster ran from side to side, desperately trying to dodge the flying rocks and escape. Soon, the rooster was too weak to even lift itself off the ground. The wounded animal's tired attempts to move only made the crowd laugh harder. The Prophet (ṣ) watched this happen and was upset to see so many people around him behaving so horrifically.

He moved through the crowd and stood in front of the rooster to shield it. The shower of rocks suddenly stopped, as everyone froze once they saw the Noble Prophet (ṣ) standing in front of them.

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) came to the crowd and said, "Who are these people? May Allah (swt) deprive them of His mercy!" The words of the Prophet (ṣ) seemed to knock some sense into the crowd, and they hung their heads in shame. Realizing what they had done, they woke up and began to disperse.

Through the Prophet's example, we see that not every form of entertainment is healthy and appropriate. This story gives us an example of the type of entertainment that people had at the time of the Prophet (ṣ) and Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). They also used to watch matches/races, and listen to poetry and stories of tradition.

Although much of the type of entertainment that people enjoy in our times did not exist back then, we can still learn some of the principles of how to deal with entertainment by studying the advice and guidance of the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt (ʿa).

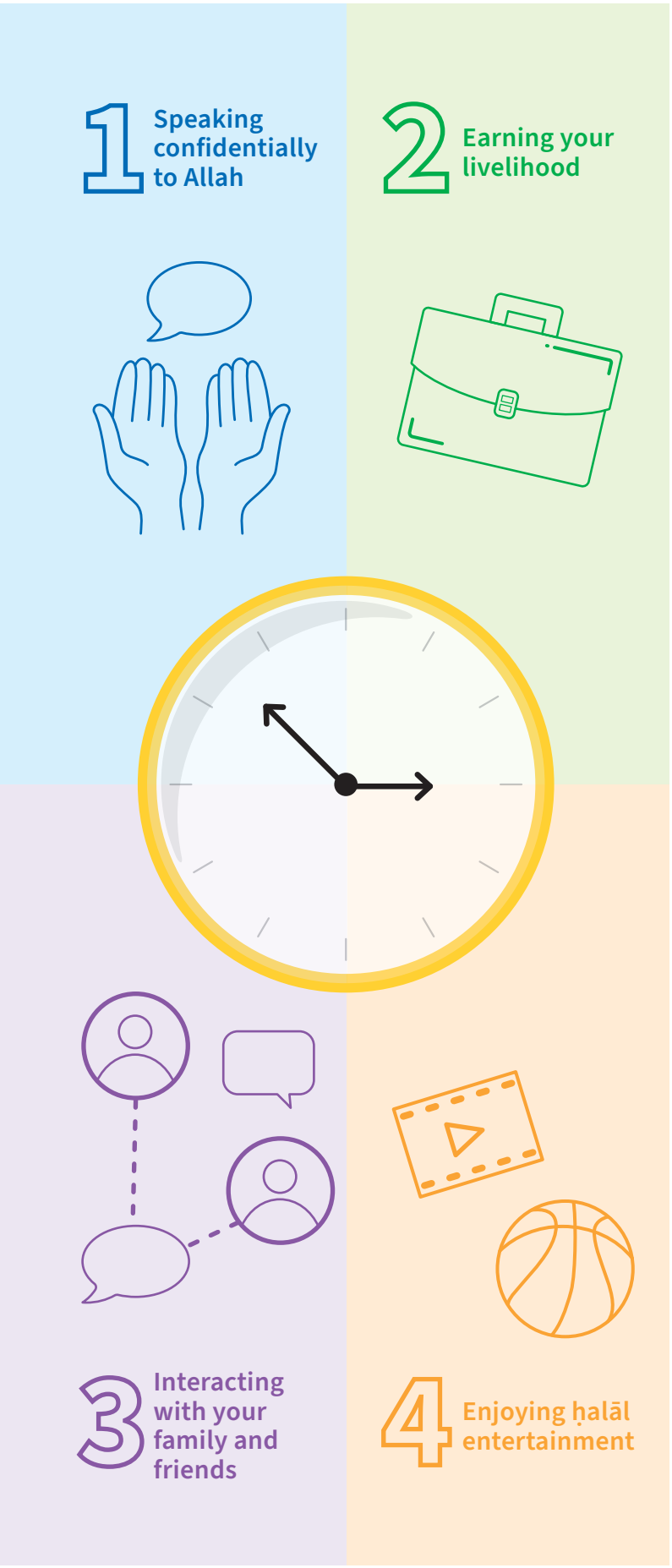
THINK ALOUD: Imagine this: everyday, someone deposits $86,400 into your bank account. You can use this money in any way that you like, but with one catch: whatever you don't use by the end of the day is taken away. What would you do with this money?

SPENDING WISELY

If you were given money in this way, first you would likely make sure that you spend it all so nothing is lost by the end of the day. Second, you would spend it on important things because you don't know if you'll receive money again the next day. A wise person would invest this money so they can later reap its benefits.

We all experience this every day, except that instead of dollars, Allah (swt) gives us 24 hours, or 86,400 seconds. This time is very valuable, and once it is gone we can never get it back. Just as we are careful with money when its amount is limited so that we may maximize the rewards, we should be careful with our time as it is also limited and we want to maximize what we get out of it beyond all else.

As we've discussed, our purpose on this earth is a very special one: getting closer to Allah (swt). No other creature can know Allah (swt) as humans do. If we sincerely wish to fulfill our purpose, our whole lives should revolve around finding ways to use our time towards this end. What does achieving this purpose actually mean? We know that we can't spend our whole day on the prayer mat. And Allah (swt) doesn't even want that from us! We do however want to schedule our time and make sure we are using it in the best way possible.



The Imāms (ʿa) have encouraged us to divide our time awake into four general sections, as we see in a ḥadīth from Imām Kaẓim (ʿa):

إِجْتَهِدُوا فِی أَنْ یَکُونَ زَمانُکُمْ أَرْبَعَ ساعات:ساعَةً لِمُناجاةِ اللهِ، وَساعَةً لِاَمْرِالْمَعاشِ، وَساعَةً لِمُعاشَرَةِ الْاِخْوانِ والثِّقاةِ الَّذینَ یُعَرِّفُونَکُمْ عُیُوبَکُمْ وَیُخَلِّصُونَ لَکُمْ فِی الْباطِنِ، وَساعَةً تَخْلُونَ فیها لِلَذّاتِکُمْ فی غَیْرِ مُحَرَّمٍ وَبِهذِهِ السّاعَةِ تَقْدِرُونَ عَلَی الثَّلاثِ ساعات

Strive to divide your day into four parts:

1. *speaking confidentially to Allah [in Salah, dua, reading Qur'an, and other forms of ibadah],*
2. *earning your livelihood [or studying, or performing other responsibilities like taking care of others]),*
3. *nteracting with your family and friends who really care for you, are aware of your needed areas of improvement, and can help you become a better person [in other traditions, it's mentioned that this portion also includes learning about the religion and spending time with teachers who will give you advice and help you in your religion], and*
4. *enjoying ḥalāl entertainment; and the purpose of this last part is to help you re-energize to perform your responsibilities in the first three parts.*

The last line of the ḥadīth tells us that even when we are relaxing or having fun, it is to serve the greater purpose. When we keep this in mind even our entertainment becomes a tool to reach closeness to Allah (swt).

BALANCE AND MODERATION

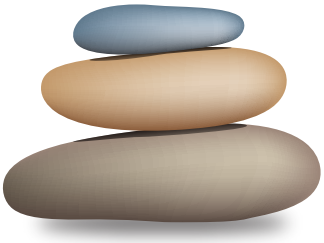
Everything that we do has purpose in this world. When we are trying to spend our time wisely, every moment serves a purpose and is made up of two components: intention and action. For example, if we are offering ṣalāh with the intention of getting closer to Allah (swt), then our action serves the purpose of getting closer to Him. If we do this same action with the intention of showing off, then we will not get closer to Allah (swt) through our ṣalāh. However, if we do something that is ḥarām, even if our intentions are good, we will not get closer to Allah (swt). This is why, for example, we cannot steal food to feed the poor.

Similarly, entertainment can fulfill the purpose of us getting closer to Allah (swt) if:

a) we have the right intention of it being a means towards a greater end,

b) the action is ḥalāl action and doesn't prevent us from performing our obligations and responsibilities, and

c) it is done in moderation (not in extreme).



Imām Sādiq (ʿa) has said,

> "The time spent in pursuing ḥālal pleasures helps someone with the other aspects of life (including worship)".

Entertainment can help us rest and rejuvenate to do more worship or our responsibilities. It can help us get closer to other believers, for example, when we spend time with our friends or family. Taking a break can also be a way of relaxing our mind and body after a long day of work.

TYPES OF ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment comes in different forms, and people have their own tastes and preferences. One way of breaking down entertainment is into the categories of mental, physical, social, and media entertainment.

MENTAL ENTERTAINMENT

One form of entertainment is mental entertainment, or fun activities that use your mind such as puzzles, crosswords, trivia competitions, and so on. Some types of reading can also get us to think and reflect in a positive way. Mental entertainment can help to strengthen one's intellect, which becomes very useful in all areas of life. Sometimes, however, mental challenges involve learning useless trivia. At other times, mental entertainment can involve ḥarām, such as games involving for gambling and betting.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Islam places great importance on physical activities and remaining fit. In fact, one of the principles for strengthening your īmān is to exercise and remain fit. We have many examples of the Prophet (ṣ) and Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) participating in different sports and physical activities. Physical activities that could be ḥarām are ones that are harmful for us, because we should not be doing things that cause us considerable harm. Also, some sports (such as contact sports that involve touching) should not be done with or in front of non-maḥrams. If you have gym class in school, you can get a note to excuse you out of activities that are considered ḥarām or inappropriate in a mixed-gender setting.

SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT

Often, our time for ḥalāl entertainment is spent with others, such as our friends. This is very important—Islam emphatically encourages us to spend time with real friends. However, there are important points to keep in mind when spending time with others. We can turn to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) for guidelines on how we should act and conduct ourselves when with friends. Social entertainment that includes gossip, backbiting, or inappropriate conversation with non-maḥrams are not allowed.

MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT

Media entertainment includes any form of entertainment we experience through reading, watching, listening, or from technology, be it in the company of others (i.e, movies, video games, plays) or alone (i.e, cell phones, tablets, books). When we consume media entertainment, we should keep the ideal purpose of entertainment in mind: something that can bring us closer to Allah (swt). For this reason, we should be aware of the content that we are consuming. For example, if you are using media entertainment to take a break with your purpose in mind, you will not watch something with ḥarām scenes, or even something that makes you distant from Allah (swt) because of its content.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP

Remember that precious gift — those 24 golden hours — that is deposited into your account each day. Now that you know some guidelines of *how* you should use some part of it, let's do some math to figure out how we can maximize the benefits of our time.

You are given 24 hours each day. How should we divide these 24 hours? One example would be as follows:

- **Sleep:** Approximately 8-9 hours (for teenagers)
- **School/work/study:** 8-9 hours
  Often, the school day will involve time for physical activity and socializing / entertainment
- **Physical activity:** 1-2 hours
  This is especially important when there's no time set aside for this during a school day
- **ʿIbādah:** 2 hours
  Enhancing our relationship with Allah and learning about the teachings of our faith, alone and/or together with others
- **Family/Social Obligations:** 3 hours
- **Entertainment:** 1 hour
  We should try to make our entertainment not limited to screens and consuming media. Also, remember that the types of entertainment often overlap (e.g., playing soccer with friends–social and physical, or playing an online trivia game–mental and media) so you can combine time!

Reminder: You don't have to divide every single day this way. Some days will look different to others, and things may add up differently! If you spend more hours on entertainment on one day, you may need to spend less the next few days. But remember to be balanced and have limits on how much time you spend in entertainment.

Activity 5.1: Dividing My Day

Make a schedule for tomorrow, or your average day fitting in all of the above categories (sleep, school, entertainment etc.)

TIME	ACTIVITY	CATEGORY

5.2 Media Literacy

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the importance of attaining true knowledge in Islam
- Identify the meaning of media literacy
- Analyze the reasons it is important to thoughtfully consume media
- Develop strategies analyzing different types of media

LEARNING AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ

So let man observe his food[1]

THINK ALOUD: How can the word, "ṭaʿām" (food) in this ayah be understood?

When we look into the tafsīr of this āyah, we learn that in addition to the physical food that we consume, we should also be aware of our spiritual consumption, like the knowledge we receive.

THINK ALOUD: What do you think it means that knowledge is considered ṭaʿām (food) in the āyah? What kind of knowledge should we be trying to gain and avoid?

As humans, we naturally have a thirst for knowledge. This quality is part of our *fiṭrah,* but the same way we have guidelines for our other desires, we have guidelines for seeking knowledge.

Allah is the source of all knowledge, and His knowledge is infinite. Our goal with seeking knowledge should be getting closer to Allah, so when we try to learn new things, it should be with that intention.

We should be careful of *where* we receive our knowledge from. We must turn to reliable sources to make sure that our souls are receiving the proper knowledge they need. This is especially true when it comes to knowledge about our religion. We should go to trusted ʿulamāʾ and books written by senior ʿulamāʾ to learn about our religion.

Sometimes, due to the ease of access to a lot of opinions on the internet and social media, people think they are very knowledgeable because they are exposed to a lot of information. However, with so many posts, articles, and videos, it is getting more and more difficult to separate the truth from the unnecessary or untruthful information.

1 *Noble Qurʾān,* ʿAbasa, 80:24

THINK ALOUD: What are some steps to take to verify the truthfulness of information that can be "noise"? Who can help you ensure you are getting knowledge from reliable sources?

MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy in the context of what we are learning is using a set of tools to think critically about the information that is presented to us. You may have learned some of these things in school, such as when looking for reliable sources when researching a project. In an Islamic context, we want to make sure that we are seeking information correctly. Not all information that we could seek out is relevant and useful for us. There are some things we are better off not knowing! Also, how we go about seeking knowledge is important, as is what we do with it.

BE SELECTIVE ABOUT WHAT NEWS WE WATCH

When it comes to watching the news, we should think about who is presenting information to us and why they are trying to present the information to us. An example that might feel obvious is Fox News. Many people know them to have a strong bias towards their own view or opinions of the world, but sometimes the problems can be less obvious. Sometimes, we might notice that a news station agrees with some things we believe in, but that does not mean they will always be right.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

1. What are some examples of new shows or stations that say some good things, but also say things we as Muslims disagree with?
2. What is the reason that news organizations present news?

Some shows that we watch might have some opinions that we agree with, but mix them with opinions we do not agree with. For example, they might say that women not being allowed to have an education is a bad thing, but they may also call women who wear hijab oppressed. They might also side with certain Muslim countries because it benefits them, while turning a blind eye to the injustices in those countries. They might also paint other countries in an extremely negative light without ever highlighting their accomplishments. In every case, they are looking to get high ratings and appeal to people.

When you are watching the news, you should also avoid information overload. If you watch a news channel for a while or read many articles, you might notice the same stories or perspectives being repeated. We should avoid occupying our minds with unnecessary information that can prevent us from thinking clearly. News stations invest large amounts of money in trying to see what will get more people to watch their broadcasts. They are also funded by people who want to promote their view of the world.

It is good to stay informed of what is happening in the world, but it is important to be confident in your values and what you know about the world before you listen to the news. For example, if we watch news about Palestine, we should be thinking about the bigger picture and what the real story must be. Over time, you will notice that the stories about Palestine from some news channels or websites always tend to present Palestinians in a negative light.

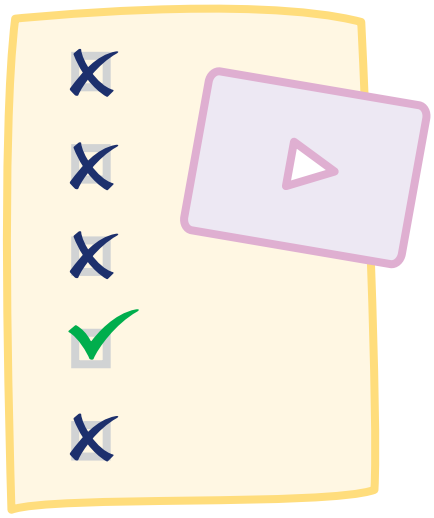
USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

We now have more direct access to news from around the world through social media. For example, Palestinians can now post videos of what is actually happening around them, and news sources have less control. We still have to think critically when we read anything on social media, whether it be news or opinions that people have. One tip to remember is that we do not have to react immediately after we read or watch anything on social media or on the news. Sometimes the news may say one thing and people on social media may be saying something else, but if we wait a few hours we will know what actually happened. This happens often with large tragedies or shootings, where news broadcasts have a story out about what happened before the police come out with a statement, and later retract what they said. Of course, the police or official government statement might also reflect a bias, so we need to be careful with whatever is said.

TIPS FOR CONSUMING NEWS MEDIA

Try to connect events with the bigger picture.	We often aren'''t given the context for what is happening in the news. If something sounds different than what we know to be true, it is important that we look deeper to try to find the truth.
Try to find reliable sources for non-mainstream news.	Ideally, we would turn to believers and other individuals who are trustworthy and unbiased, and who can provide accurate perspectives about current events.
Don'''t drown yourself in negative news.	Realize that Allah is helping people all the time and there are many great things happening in the world that aren't being highlighted in the news.
Less is more.	We don'''t need to keep track of everything and all the details of what is happening on the news, as they often repeat negative reports for views. Knowing the bigger picture and keeping aware of major events is more useful.
Have hope in Allah (swt).	Make sure to always couple negative news with hope in the help of Allah (swt) and the eventual victory of truth over justice. Be confident that Allah will ultimately bring about justice, even though He gives people many chances to realize their errors and reform.
Don'''t consider yourself outside of the news.	Do what your taklīf—responsibility—is in every situation and inshāAllah you can be a help to others. By working hard and allowing Allah to show His perfection through you, you can be a force of change for goodness.

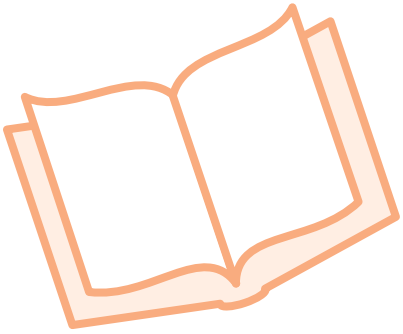
BEING SELECTIVE WITH WHAT WE WATCH



THINK ALOUD: Have you ever noticed how watching something can affect your emotions and your mood?

When we consume media, like movies, television shows, and video games, we have to be thoughtful about what we consume. In previous lessons, we talked about how entertainment is meant to help us get closer to Allah (swt) by giving us a break. We should always reflect on what the entertainment we are watching is trying to present to us, and decide whether it is helping or hurting us.

BE SELECTIVE ABOUT AUTHORS WE READ



Many novels reflect the worst parts about the culture that we are in. We should avoid being polluted by these aspects. Sometimes, we can be aware of these aspects without being entertained by them. For example, if you have to read a classic book for school, you should be aware of why the country you are in values that book. Not all fiction is bad, but we should also try to balance fiction with some non-fiction, so we can gain knowledge as we read.

Non-fiction doesn't necessarily mean non-entertaining. You can read to learn more about the world, including biographies, almanacs (for example almanacs of plants or animals), or photography books like *Material World* and *Hungry Planet*. You can also read to help you with a hobby or something you want to learn more about, like sewing or woodworking.

SEEK BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

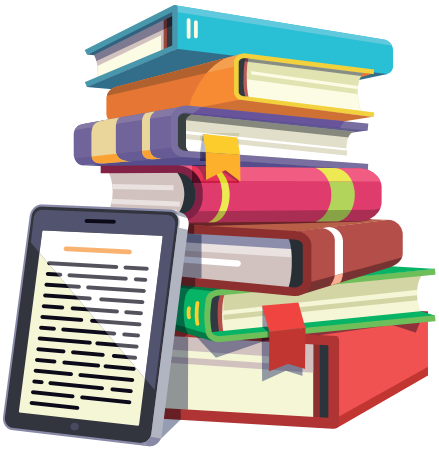
Trying to seek out knowledge that is beneficial to our dunya and hereafter and that we can practically apply in our lives. When seeking out Islamic knowledge, make sure to refer to trusted sources — not just googling any question that we have, or looking at any discussion forums, or social media, like Reddit and Twitter.

All knowledge comes from Allah (swt).

Remember that true knowledge is not gained solely by gathering information. All knowledge comes from Allah. If we act on what we know and what is wājib and stay away from what is ḥarām, Allah will guide us to higher levels of understanding.

LOOK AT KNOWLEDGE THAT WE LEARN IN OUR TEXTBOOKS WITH A CRITICAL LENS

We have to be thoughtful about the information being presented to us even in school textbooks. History is often written by the winners, and there is a bias and agenda behind everything we read.



For example, when a social studies textbook talks about a war, do they fairly depict both sides of the struggle? Do they present history as always having one interpretation or do they also include alternate views? Do they whitewash the image of leaders or present their true character? Do they present Islam and Muslims in a fair and accurate manner?

For example, one Canadian history textbook says:

> *The outbreak of the war in 1914 at first unified the country. Many Canadians — particularly those of British origin — volunteered and fought bravely in Europe. Trench warfare was horrible (...) and casualties were high. In one attack in April 1915, 60 percent of the men in a Canadian division were killed or wounded in a single day. In another day's fighting at the Somme in 1916, the Canadian contingent of 77 000 was ordered to advance part of the line 1 km. This was done at the expense of 24 000 casualties.*

THINK ALOUD: If this is all that the textbook says about the attack in April 1915, do you see the bias that it presents? What is it?

A U.S. textbook used in middle school says:

> *Muhammad had not named a successor or instructed his followers how to choose one upon his death. Panic swept through the Muslim community. Muhammad's father-in-law and trusted friend, Abu Bakr, spoke to reassure Muslims. He said, "If there are any among you who worshipped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worship, he lives forever."*

THINK ALOUD: Do you think the book has presented the history of Islam and Muslims in a fair and accurate manner? Why or why not?

RESEARCHING THE INTERNET

When we look up something on the internet, it is important to ask ourselves.

1. **Do I know who authored this website?**
   We should always look at the about page of a website and try to read who authored the website.
2. **Why did someone make this website?**
3. **When was this website last updated?**
   This can often be found at the bottom of the website page.
4. **Was it the first website you saw?**
   Sometimes these can be ads. People often pay to be at the top of a search engine's webpage (like Google).

CONCLUSION

When presented with information, whether it be something you watch on the news, media, books, school or anywhere else, we should think critically about it. We have to remember there is always a reason why someone is presenting the information to us. We want to use our knowledge to get closer to Allah (swt), by only seeking what is true, in order to strengthen our hearts and minds. Sometimes, this means asking ourselves questions about where information came from, and sometimes it means avoiding information overload. Inshallah with these tools, we can use our knowledge to get closer to Allah (swt).

Activity 5.2: Researching News Sources

Research two news articles from different news sources on the same event. For example, find one news article from CNN and one from Aljazeera or a local news source on the topic of presidential elections. Then, compare the similarities and differences in framing below:

1. Title of Article 1: _____

   What does the title tell you about the perspective of the author?

2. Author of Article 1: _____

   Google the author. What do you find out about them?

3. Summarize what the article says about the topic.

4. Title of Article 2: _____

   What does the title tell you about the perspective of the author?

5. Author of Article 2: _____

   Google the author. What do you find out about them?

6. Summarize what the article says about the topic.

7. Compare and contrast the two articles. What are the similarities and differences between what they are saying about the topic?

STEPS TO PERFECTION

An Islamic Curriculum For Youth

The *Steps to Perfection* 7th grade curriculum strives to build upon the development of a strong Islamic foundation, which began from the kindergarten book. The ʿaqāʾid unit continues to focus on Tawḥīd and the Attributes of Allah (swt) presented with a more critical thinking and analytical approach, while also introducing deeper concepts such as the purpose of human beings, the concept of ʿismah, imāmah and prophethood. The fiqh unit consists of relevant topics that teenagers and young adults will come across in today's society and prepares them with a hands-on approach to Islamic laws. The history unit continues to focus on Islamic history through the lives of the Imāms and Prophets, with key features and spotlights on selected individuals in Islamic history. In akhlāq, we dive straight into critical thinking and application of lessons to develop well-rounded Muslim characteristics.

AL-KISA FOUNDATION

SABA